

Indians as French Citizens in Colonial Indochina, 1858-1940

by

Natasha Pairaudeau

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
University of London
School of Oriental and African Studies
Department of History
June 2009**

ProQuest Number: 10672932

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10672932

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Abstract

This study demonstrates how Indians with French citizenship were able through their stay in Indochina to have some say in shaping their position within the French colonial empire, and how in turn they made their mark on Indochina itself. Known as 'renouncers', they gained their citizenship by renouncing their personal laws in order to be judged by the French civil code. Mainly residing in Cochinchina, they served primarily as functionaries in the French colonial administration, and spent the early decades of their stay battling to secure recognition of their electoral and civil rights in the colony. Their presence in Indochina in turn had an important influence on the ways in which the peoples of Indochina experienced and assessed French colonialism.

Indochina was important to French India from the late-nineteenth century, I maintain, because of the way renouncers were able to develop social and political agendas over long distances to secure their rights within the French empire. I further the study of late-colonial migrations from British India by adding a trajectory under French colonial conditions to other better-known itineraries. I advance thinking on migration by showing how movements stimulated the circulation not just of goods and labour but of ideas. I support claims that colonised peoples were not passive agents, and bring to the fore the struggles of colonised people fighting not against, but within a colonial framework. I reinstate the Indian presence in the colonial history of Vietnam, not only to support the restoration to southern Vietnam of its historical social diversity, or to draw attention to long-neglected minority groups. The thesis, I argue, brings new insights to the complexities of colonial encounters. The presence of Indian French citizens in colonial Indochina generated encounters between Indians and Vietnamese which were outside of French control. In so doing it highlighted not the strengths but the inherent weaknesses of colonial rule.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Acknowledgements	5
Glossary	9
List of Illustrations and Tables	10
Abbreviations	11
 PART ONE	 13
Chapter One: Introduction	14
CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW	14
MAIN ARGUMENT, THEORY AND LITERATURE	19
SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY	38
TERMS AND SPELLING	41
PERIODISATION	45
CHAPTER SUMMARY	46
Chapter Two: Legal Status and other markers of identity	51
'RENUNCIATION', ITS ORIGINS AND OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT	51
WHO THE RENOUNCERS WERE AND WHAT THEY SOUGHT	57
THE EXTENT OF RENUNCIATION, AT HOME AND OVERSEAS	64
LINKS TO INDOCHINA	66
INDIAN RENUNCIATION AND <i>ANNAMITE</i> NATURALISATION COMPARED	72
RENOUNCERS' LEGAL RIGHTS IN COCHINCHINA	73
STATUS IN COCHINCHINA OF OTHER MIGRANTS OF INDIAN ORIGIN	77
CONCLUSION	83
Chapter Three: Renouncer occupations and wider Tamil networks	85
RENOUNCERS IN THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION	87
A SUPPRESSED PROFESSIONAL CLASS	96
EMPLOYEES OF PRIVATE FRENCH FIRMS	97
CAREER SOLDIERS AND MILITARY SERVICE	98
'INDIAN SHOPS' AND RELATED NICHEs OF MUSLIM ENTERPRISE	100
NATTUKOTTAI CHETTIARS AND OTHER TAMIL BANKERS	103
LIVESTOCK, TRANSPORT, AND MILK	108
TAX FARMS AND GOVERNMENT TENDERS	112
URBAN AND RURAL LAND INVESTMENTS	115
PURVEYORS TO SAIGON'S EXPATRIATES	120
TEACHERS OF TAMIL CHILDREN	122
CONCLUSION	125
 Illustrations	 128

PART TWO	140
Chapter Four: Electoral Franchise	141
NATIVE SUFFRAGE IN THE 'OLD COLONIES' AND THE 'NEW'	141
EARLY LICENSE AT THE COCHINCHINESE BALLOT BOX	145
THE INDIAN VOTE CONTESTED	146
THE 1888 DEPUTY ELECTIONS: A LAST-MINUTE RESCUE FOR THE INDIAN VOTE	151
THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR CAMPAIGNS	153
ELECTION DAY AND THE OUTCOME	159
A DEFINITIVE LEGAL RULING	161
THE 'LEGEND' OF INDIAN VOTERS: A POWERFUL BUT MALLEABLE FORCE	164
DEVOTED DEPUTIES	167
POLITICAL DISILLUSION	172
CONCLUSION	176
Chapter Five: Renouncer functionaries and 'European' contractual privileges	178
'EUROPEAN' AGENTS AND THE BADGE OF ASSIMILATION	180
TROUBLES WITH 'NATIVE STATUS'	191
THE CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND SAIGON'S INDIAN POLICEMEN	197
INFORMAL EXCLUSION AND THE PERSISTENCE OF 'NATIVE CADRES'	212
CONCLUSIONS	217
Chapter Six: Vietnamese Engagement with Renouncers and other Indian Migrants	219
GILBERT CHIEU: 'HIT THE <i>CHET</i> AND EXPEL THE <i>CHAI</i> '	221
THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS AND NGUYEN AN NINH: 'LA QUESTION INDIENNE'	227
GRASSROOTS RESPONSES AND INCREASINGLY TROUBLED RELATIONS	236
RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION	245
REACTIONS TO THE PROSPECT OF KINSHIP	246
CONCLUSION	254
Chapter Seven: Raising the <i>Hindou</i> Profile	255
CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION	256
MODERN MEN, HISTORICAL PURPOSE	265
UNITY AND DISCORD	275
IN THE INTEREST OF ALL <i>HINDOUS</i>	285
CONCLUSION	294
Conclusion	296
Bibliography	303
ARCHIVES AND RECORDS	303
SERIAL RUNS	304
BOOKS AND ARTICLES	304
INTERNET SITES	316
Appendices	317
APPENDIX I: TEXT OF THE 'DECREE RELATIVE TO PERSONAL STATUS', 21 SEPTEMBER 1881	318
APPENDIX II : THE STEAMBOAT VENTURES OF DARMANADEN PROUCHANDY	320
APPENDIX III : FRENCH INDIAN SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS IN COCHINCHINA, 1900-1940	324

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for financial assistance received from several quarters. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) provided a generous three-year Doctoral fellowship(2003-2007) to finance my studies. The cost of tuition was offset over the same period by funding from the Overseas Research Students Award Scheme (ORS). Travel to India and Vietnam was facilitated by grants from the University of London's Central Research Fund and from a SOAS Additional Award for Fieldwork.

William Gervase Clarence-Smith has supervised this thesis from my arrival at SOAS to undertake a research degree through to its completion. I am grateful to him as much for his calculated silences as I struggled at the outset with the numerous directions the thesis could have taken, as I am for the depth of his knowledge and his infectious interest in the fine but nevertheless consequential details of history. If I alone must take responsibility for the direction, or any misdirection, chosen, I am indebted to Gervase for his firm guidance on the form and content of the thesis as it took shape. Not least, he is as supportive and patient a supervisor as anyone could hope for, and I am deeply appreciative of this.

This thesis is the product in part of research conducted in libraries and archives. I am indebted to a number of institutions for graciously permitting me access to their holdings. In Vietnam these include the Vietnamese National Archives Number Two (*Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia II*) in Ho Chi Minh City, where Director Dr. Phan Đình Nham got me started by offering helpful words of advice at the very outset. His staff deserve praise too for their reception of my many requests for documents and their efforts to ensure that the system in place – which necessitates approval from Hanoi for each file requested – was as prompt and efficient as they could make it. The General Sciences Library, Ho Chi Minh City (*Thư Viện Khoa Học Tổng Hợp*) was a valuable source of rare newspapers and other documents. I am grateful to Lê Thị Thanh Thuý (Deputy Head of Professional Research and Guidance) both for her friendship and for facilitating my work there. At National Archive Number One in Hanoi (*Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia I*) Ms. Vũ Thị Minh Hương was particularly helpful. Staff at the newspapers section of the Hanoi National Library (*Thư Viện Quốc Gia Việt Nam*) are also to be thanked for their assistance. At the Hanoi Institute of Social Sciences Library (*Thư viện Khoa học xã hội*) I also greatly appreciated the generous help and advice of Vice-Director Mrs. Dang Thi Thanh Ha.

At the French colonial archives in Aix, I greatly appreciated Mme Lucette Vachier's intimate knowledge of the Indochinese papers. Her keen interest in the Indian question, and her help in finding the relevant material was invaluable. In Paris, members of staff at the archives of the French Foreign Ministry, the French National Archives, at the *Documentation Française* library, at INALCO, as well as at the archive of the League

of Human Rights all deserve my sincere thanks. And I cannot praise highly enough the reproduction department of the French National Library, whose service allowed me to order, online, copies of rare nineteenth century tracts and receive them at my laptop in Hanoi.

In Pondicherry, my research relied on the Indian National Archive and the libraries of the *Institut Français* and the *Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*. I am grateful for the access gained to all three of these institutions and in particular to Jean Deloche and Dominic Goodhall, both at the EFEO. Elsewhere, the National Archives of Cambodia proved a very pleasant place to work, as was the India Office Library within the British Library and the British National Archive at Kew.

Many scholars and other individuals have helped me, in ways both large and small, to carry out this research. I would like to thank Dr. Tôn Nữ Quỳnh Trân, of the Centre for Urbanisation and Development (*Trung Tâm Nghiên Cứu Đô Thị và Phát Triển*) for her friendship and her help in organising my research in Ho Chi Minh City; Dr. Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng, president of Hồng Bàng University, also in Ho Chi Minh City, for sponsoring my research stay there; and Professor Trịnh Văn Thảo, formerly of the Department of Sociology, Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille, for his early support for the idea of a DEA on this topic (although it never came to fruition) and several conversations since. Numerous people aided me too, with valuable leads either to relevant sources of documentation, engaging individuals to interview, hidden sites of overseas Indian interest, or engaging anecdotes. Philippe Peycam was an early champion of this cause and I have him to thank for several contacts who proved crucial to this study. It was not until I reached Pondicherry that I understood how far Yann Martel pedalled on my behalf, and I now have the chance to fulsomely thank him. Brij V. Lal, Peter Reeves, and Rajesh Rai gave me the opportunity to contribute to the *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* and thereby think through the thesis at a crucial stage. I am grateful to Vasoodevan Vuddamalay for his keen interest in my research, and to the editors at *Hommes et Migrations* for a similar opportunity to think things through. Professors Đào Hùng in Hanoi and Nguyễn Đình Đầu in Ho Chi Minh City have both been very supportive of my work, as well as generous in sharing their knowledge and reminiscences about the Indian presence. Ann Marie Leshkowitz generously shared her knowledge of the comings and going at Saigon's Mariamman temple with me. I have enjoyed exchanging views with Malte Stokhof on our areas of mutual scholarly interest. I thank Philip Taylor for directing me to Lê Văn Duyệt's tomb to seek out its Chettiar patrons; Erica Peters for alerting me to cartoons depicting Tamil milkmen; Huệ-Tâm Hồ Tài for valuable sources on Cochinchinese elections and David Del Testa for leads on anti-Indian protests in Annam. I am grateful to Sarah Womack for pointing me in the direction of the censors' digest at Aix. Tài Văn Tạ very kindly arranged for me to meet the Indian side of his family, and was generous with his time and his own insights. I am grateful to Peter Zinoman for his clear-headed comments on an earlier version of Chapter Six, which I presented in 2007 to the Berkeley graduate student conference. He and Nguyễn Nguyệt Cẩm have since become a great source of friendship and encouragement

From among a community of friends, many of them scholars, whose paths I have the pleasure of crossing periodically in Hanoi and sometimes elsewhere, Professor Susan Bayly deserves a special mention. Had I not met her in Hanoi in 1997, with a bundle of notes I was not then convinced merited a thesis, I may never have undertaken this project. I am grateful to her for this, for the many fruitful conversations we have had thereafter, for her invaluable help in navigating through the Indian scholarship, and for her unflagging support and encouragement. Another special word of thanks is due to the community of *bon viveurs* who constitute the Câu Lạc Bộ of Yên Phụ village. The CLB has been both a source of great fun and of serious scholarly insight during the years I have lived in Hanoi. My greatest debt is owed to Professor Đặng Phong at whose table I have learned much about Vietnam, its history and its people. Professor Phong aided my research by directing me to several Indian sites in Hanoi, through his generous introductions to numerous Vietnamese, and Indo-Vietnamese, with memories of the Indian presence, and with his own characteristically irreverent reminiscences. I have also enjoyed, over the years, the friendship and support of several other CLB members, both *à table* and during the CLB's many expeditions to places near and far. They include Melanie Beresford, Đào Thị Kim Lan, Lê Thị Mai, the late Lê Xuân Tú, and Kirsten Endres. I thank Andrew Hardy too, especially for sesame presses and pigs' ears. Other great friends, some residents and others sometimes sojourners in Hanoi, are unflagging sources of support. They include Nguyễn Thị Nguyệt Minh, Dương Bích Hạnh, Vũ Hồng Liên, Julie Phạm, Claire Burkert, Drew Smith, Meagan Enticknap, Marjoleine and Frank Wieringa and François Tainturier. I offer my sincerest thanks to Nguyễn Tạo Ngô, for his decoding of southern Vietnamese slang, for his lengthy transcription and for keeping my growing family in shoes. Erich DeWald kept his eyes peeled for me during his own stay in the archives and libraries. I am grateful to him for several documents he unearthed on my behalf, for lakeside coffees and for his help in bridging the distance between Hanoi and the examinations office.

My greatest debt is reserved for the many Indians and Indo-Vietnamese who gave generously of their time to recount for me their family histories and their own memories of life in pre- as well as post-colonial Vietnam. Their own thinking and reflections on the Indian presence have been invaluable, whether or not they are respected scholars in their own right (as several of them are). My experience would have been less rich, and far less enjoyable, without their input. I trust I have done credit to the histories they have recounted, and that they will find here besides new discoveries, new connections and plentiful avenues for further discussion and debate. Any errors of fact or interpretation are entirely my own.

I am lucky to have met Dr. Joseph Antoine in Saigon in 1996, while he was in search of the childhood tree house his father had built in the garden of the family villa. His story intrigued me and got me started. In this early period Bà Alam also generously traced for me the contours of Indian (and particularly Muslim) Saigon, past and present. In Saigon Kemal Nguyễn kindly recounted his family's fascinating and complex history. There are several Vietnam-based Indians whom I will not name, but to whom I am very grateful for the time they spent to talk to me.

In India and Paris I am indebted to more people than I can mention here who described their connections to Indochina with enthusiasm, patience and good humour. Again, I am no less appreciative for not being able to name each of these individuals personally, but there are a few people to whom I owe a special thanks. They include Claude Marius and his wife Rita for many engaging conversations; Maurice Sinnas and his family for their generous welcome and all of their help; and JBP More for gripping stories and many email exchanges since. The story Pichaya Manet recounted for me at his guesthouse in 2002 first convinced me of the great scope that lay in re-connecting Pondicherry to Saigon; I thank him too for his friendship and his infectious enthusiasm. Mrs. Amèlie Marius Le Prince was particularly generous with her time and her memories, and was great company over two long rainy Pondicherry afternoons. I was fortunate to meet Meenakshi Meyyappan who shared her deep knowledge of the Chettiar presence in Indochina. She and her brother, S. Muthiah were generous with their help in arranging interviews in Trichy and Chettinad. I am grateful to Atmenadene Michel Audemar and his mother, Bà Saú, for extending their welcome in Paris, Pondicherry and Saigon. Among the ongoing 'translocal' friendships I have formed in the course of this research, Michel Audemar's as well as that of Tony Bui deserve a special mention. I owe thanks too to Abdoul Gaffour and to the Said family who graciously welcomed me during my stay in Pondicherry, and to Douglas Gressieux of the Paris-based association *Les Comptoirs de l'Inde*.

I thank my parents who continue to inspire me by their interest in the world and its unexpected connections. Without William Smith, endlessly supportive as husband, father and informal research assistant, this thesis may never have been completed. Flora and Silas have helped to extend the final leg of the journey but their delaying tactics have been a constant delight to me.

Glossary

Annamite	(Fr.) ethnic Vietnamese, colonial usage
Bảy	(Vn.) lit. 'seven'; person of Indian origin, especially Muslim
Chà Và	(Vn.) lit. 'Java'; originally Javanese trader in Cochinchina, later came to include Indians, Malays, Bawean and any darker-skinned Asian migrant to Cochinchina
Chêc (Chệt)	(Vn.) overseas Chinese
Chetty (Chetti)	person of Nattukottai Chettiar banking caste; more generally, any Indian or any moneylender
congaie	(Fr.) from Vietnamese con gái ('daughter'); native concubine
hindou (indou)	(Fr.) person from the Indian subcontinent
Malabar	(Fr.) Tamil or Indian (in Indochina)
pariah	(Fr.) title of person of 'impure' or 'unclean' status in Hindu social order (nineteenth-century usage)
Tây đen	(Vn.) lit. 'Black Westerner'; Indian or other dark-skinned colonial intermediary
quốc ngữ	(Vn.) romanised Vietnamese script
vellalla	high-ranking Tamil caste title (agriculturalists, landowners)

List of Illustrations and Tables

Illustrations

Plate 1 Postcard showing France's possessions in India	129
Plate 2 Map of colonial Indochina.....	130
Plate 3 An Indian functionary and his family, Hanoi circa 1920	131
Plate 4 Tamil Muslim Merchants in Cochinchina	132
Plate 5 Chetty 'Types', Saigon.....	132
Plate 6 Tamil Carters Cochinchina.....	133
Plate 7 Tamil milkman admonished by a Vietnamese servant.....	133
Plate 8 Indian Magistrate in Cochinchina and his wife, 1925	134
Plate 9 Tamil Sesame Press, Cochinchina.....	134
Plate 10 Public bill printed by 'a group of Indian voters', Cochinchina Legislative election 1888	135
Plate 11 Voting card of an Indian, Virassamipoullé, Cochinchina Legislative Election, 1888...	136
Plate 12 The 'Villa Ernest Outrey', Pondicherry	136
Plate 13 'Types of the Far East: Annamite, Chinese and Malabar'	137
Plate 14 Recipients of the 'Bronze Medal for Mutuality' Symphorien Lami... ..	138
Plate 15 ...and Lourdes Nadin	138
Plate 16 Advertisement for the Indian supplier 'Au Comptoir Hindou'	139
Plate 17 Announcement of a Tamil film screening in Saigon.....	139

Tables

Table 1: Population in Cochinchina of residents of Indian origin, 1888-1939	66
Table 2 : Population and distribution of South Indian Muslims in Cochinchina, 1926	80

Abbreviations

ACCH	Annuaire de la Cochinchine Française
AF	Anciens fonds
AGI	Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine
AMAE	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (French Foreign Ministry Archive)
ANOM	Archives nationales d'outre mer (French National Overseas Archives, Aix)
ASI	Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine
BNA	British National Archives (Kew)
CARAN	Le Centre d'accueil et de recherche des Archives nationales
CP	Conseil Privé
DEA	Diplôme d'études approfondies
DM	Dépêches Ministérielles (ministerial despatches)
EFI	Etablissements français dans l'Inde
FO	Foreign Office Records
Fr.	French
Goucoch	(Archive of) Governor of Cochinchina
GD	Goucoch divers
GCCH	Gouverneur de la Cochinchine
GGI	Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine
GEFI	Gouverneur des Etablissements français dans l'Inde
IOL	India Office Library (British Library)
JOEFI	Journal Officiel des Etablissements français dans l'Inde

LDH	Archive of the League of Human Rights (Ligue des Droits de l'Homme), Nanterre
LTTV	Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn
MOEFI	Moniteur Officiel des Etablissements français dans l'Inde
MMC	Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies
NAC	National Archives of Cambodia
NAIP	National Archives of India Record Centre, Pondicherry
NF	Nouveau fonds
RST	Résidence Supérieure du Tonkin
SLOTFOM	Fonds du Service de liaison des originaires des territoires français d'outre mer
Vn.	Vietnamese
VNA1	Vietnamese National Archives Number One (Lưu Trữ Quốc Già 1) Hanoi
VNA2	Vietnamese National Archives Number Two (Lưu Trữ Quốc Già 2), Ho Chi Minh City
WO	War Office Records

PART ONE

Chapter One: Introduction

The central concerns of this study are how Indians with French citizenship were able, through their stay in Indochina, to have some say in shaping their position within the French colonial empire, and how in turn they made their mark on Indochina itself. Known as renouncers (*renonçants*) for the means by which their citizenship was gained, they served in administrative, policing, military and service positions, helping to secure and maintain French imperial authority through the Indochinese peninsula. They were no mere passive colonial intermediaries though, but also acted on their own account, wielding their French citizenship with a sense of purpose. Renouncers seized upon Indochina, and most notably Cochinchina, as a place where they might realise their ambition of exercising their full rights as French citizens. They determined to shape Indochina as a place where they themselves at least, might become the ideal colonial citizens, benefiting from citizenship rights upheld by the French Republic which extended seamlessly to them in its overseas empire.¹ Their presence in Indochina, as both colonial intermediaries positioned at the frontlines of French rule and as colonial citizens with their own agenda, in turn had an important influence on the ways in which the peoples of Indochina experienced and assessed French colonialism.

Context and overview

By the late nineteenth century, France's dream of an empire in India, nurtured by Governor Dupleix in the sixteenth century, had definitively collapsed. It had been reduced, through British gains, to 'an ethnic and administrative hodgepodge whose longevity belied its incongruity'.² The French Establishments in the late nineteenth century (Pondicherry, Karikal, Chandernagore, Yanaon and Mahé) comprised a number

¹ For this late nineteenth century conception of assimilation, see Martin Deming Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The Assimilation Theory in French Colonial Policy', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 4, 1962, 129-153 (especially pp. 132-133).

² Jacques Dupuis, *Histoire de l'Inde*, Pondicherry: Kailash, 1996, pp. 254-255; N. Gupta, 'The Citizens of French India: the Issue of Cultural Identity in Pondicherry in the XIXth Century', *Association historique internationale de l'Océan Indien, Les relations historiques et culturelles entre la France et l'Inde XVIIe-XXe siècles, Actes de conférence internationales France-Inde, 21-28 juillet 1986*, 161-173 (p. 161); quote from William F. Miles, 'Citizens without soil: the French of India (Pondicherry)', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol 13, no 2, 1990, 252-273 (p. 252).

of small, and internally dis-contiguous territories, separated from one another by great distances. Pondicherry, the largest of the Establishments, covered an area of 293 square kilometres, and comprised twelve isolated tracts of land which could only be reached by passing through British territory. Its population in 1880 was 150,000. France's second largest possession, Karikal, had a population of 92, 000 in the same year, and extended over an area, similarly fragmented, of only 160 square kilometres. The total area of the other three possessions was a mere forty-seven square kilometres (see Plate 1).³

In the late nineteenth century, Indians in France's five modest 'Establishments' were given substantive rights. In 1870 all persons native to the French possessions in India were given the right to vote. It is worth mentioning that universal franchise was a privilege not enjoyed by British Indians until many decades later.⁴ In 1881 Indians in the French Establishments were granted the means to obtain French citizenship through a process called 'renunciation'. Again this contrasted with policy in British India, where no distinction was made between 'citizens' and 'subjects'. These policies reflected a return to an assimilationist approach to rule over France's more long-established colonies with the rise of the Third Republic in France – they constituted in fact, the reintroduction of liberal policies.⁵ It has been suggested, however, that France was equally encouraged to promote such policies in its Indian possessions in order to spite the British, bringing democracy to its toeholds in the subcontinent with the aim of inciting discontent across their borders.⁶

'Renunciation' is a somewhat unusual concept, but an important one for understanding the role of Indians with French citizenship in colonial Indochina. Renunciation differed from the more prevalent process of naturalisation put in place in other French overseas possessions, among them Cochinchina. Naturalisation admitted colonial people to French citizenship only if they were judged by French authorities to

³ Raymond Delval, *Musulmans français d'origine indienne*, Paris: Centre des Hautes Etudes sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes, 1987, p. 141; Miles, 'Citizens without soil', pp. 5, 252.

⁴ Gupta, 'Citizens of French India', pp.170-171.

⁵ Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen', pp. 134-135.

⁶ Paul Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises aux Indiens français ou Comment peut-on être Franco-Pondichérien?', unpublished DEA thesis, Université Aix-Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, 1990, p. 41.

have acquired sufficient cultural and moral traits to make them worthy of the status. By contrast, the decree on renunciation enacted in French India in 1881 allowed people native to France's possessions in India to freely choose, if they wished, to 'renounce' their native personal laws (or as they and French administrators both put it, their 'caste and customs') and submit to the French civil code. The meaning of renunciation was hotly debated, but those who had renounced were ultimately recognised in law to have obtained French citizenship through the process.

Indochina was vast in comparison to France's modest patchwork of territories in India. Most of Indochina's renouncer population resided in only one of Indochina's *pays*, Cochinchina, in what is the southern part of modern-day Vietnam. Nevertheless they found themselves in a colony drawn on a much larger scale. Cochinchina's population in 1884 was 1.6 million, and once the French had completed their conquest of its several provinces it covered an area of 60,000 square kilometres.⁷ The concentration of Indian French citizens in Cochinchina was consistent with their role as intermediaries and that colony's standing as the sole territory to be brought under direct French administration. In strictly numerical terms, they were a modest group. Cochinchina's population of French citizens of Indian origin totalled no more than 2000 in the interwar years.⁸ They were concentrated in the colonial city of Saigon, in Cholon, its ethnic Chinese 'sister' city, and in the towns of the Mekong Delta.⁹ Small pockets of renouncers resided elsewhere in Indochina too. Their numbers were negligible in Laos and Annam, but they were noticeable in Cambodia, in Phnom Penh, with its close economic ties and reliance on transport links in Cochinchina, and in Tonkin in Hanoi (the capital of the Indochinese Union) and the port city of Haiphong. In these places, as in Cochinchina, most Indian French citizens were employed either by the French state or by private French interests. With frequent transfers within Indochina and the presence of relatives and friends elsewhere on the peninsula, a web of renouncer connections was created, linking together Indochina's urban nodes with Saigon at their centre. This thesis is primarily about

⁷ A. Bouinai and A. Paulus, *Indo-Chine française contemporaine*, Paris: Challamel Ainé, 1885, p. 32, 224.

⁸ P. Huard 'Chinois, Japonais et Hindous en Indochine', *Bulletin Économique Indochinois*, vol. 3, 1939, 484-485.

⁹ Saigon and Cholon were together renamed Ho Chi Minh City following the defeat of South Vietnam to the communists in 1975.

Cochinchina, where the core of renouncers resided, but it inevitably crosses these boundaries into other parts of Indochina because of these ties (see Plate 2).

The Indian French citizens of Indochina came almost exclusively from Pondicherry and Karikal, France's enclaves in Tamil country. These, hugging India's east coast were surrounded inland by the Madras Presidency. Few if any migrants to Indochina were from the three other Establishments. The pull of migrants from Pondicherry reflected both its status as the seat of administration for the scattered French *comptoirs*, and its position as the source of indigenous expertise in colonial matters. Among the lesser Establishments, Karikal was the most tightly linked to Pondicherry, by virtue of its shared language and culture and its geographical proximity (it lies 130 kilometres south of Pondicherry).

The renouncers were by no means the only Indian migrants to Indochina, and their lives there were in many ways inseparable from the lives of other overseas Indians. Included within renouncer social circles was a small group of Indo-French créoles, of mixed French (or more often Portuguese) and Indian parentage. These individuals were French citizens too, most having gained this status through a father or forefather's recognition of paternity. Some Indo-French, in the absence of paternal recognition, may have gained their citizenship through the process of renunciation. Collectively, these Frenchmen of India were known in Indochina as the *Français de l'Inde*. The common interests of renounced Indians and Indo-French as citizens of colonial origin became more pronounced by the 1920s, and my use of the term *Français de l'Inde*, particularly in the final chapter, reflects this. Créoles from French India who were of pure European stock (more often people who passed as European or simply denied their Indian heritage) stood apart from the *Français de l'Inde*, identifying themselves with Europeans.

Like the *Français de l'Inde*, most other Indian migrants to Indochina were of ethnic Tamil origin, but while some were subjects of French India (those who had declined the invitation to 'renounce' and gain French citizenship, choosing instead to retain their indigenous personal status), others were from parts of India under British

influence. Although these migrants were mainly involved in trade, rather than in service to the French government, the pattern of their settlement in Indochina mirrored that of the renouncers. In the interwar years, when the Indian migrant population was at its peak, some 4000 British Indians, and an estimated 1500 French subjects of India resided in Cochinchina.¹⁰ It was Cochinchina's status as the commercial capital of the Indochinese Union which drew them there. Like the renouncers, smaller numbers of both Indian French subjects and British Indians lived and worked in towns and cities elsewhere in Indochina.

The means to legally 'renounce' was not made available until 1881, but many of the men who would later undergo this transformation, of their legal as well as their social identities, were already employed in Cochinchina from the beginnings of the French occupation there, often in administrative positions in which they were already freely granted 'European' employment status. The early 1880s, once the renunciation decree was put into place, to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, were times of agitation and ferment for renouncers in Cochinchina. They fought both to maintain their right to vote and to secure the privileges of their citizenship as employees of the French administration. Although turbulent, these decades also marked renouncers' heyday in the colony, when they made many gains in pursuit of their cosmopolitan colonial ideal. They successfully defended their place within the French electorate of Cochinchina, even managing thereafter to use the legislative electoral system to further defend their interests in the colony. Not all of renouncers' claims to the right to European status within the administration were successful. Some Indian French citizens were remarkably effective at persuading their superiors of their right to equal treatment with their European colleagues, but the demands of others (notably those employed at the most subordinate levels rather than in the middle and higher ranks of the service) posed too great a threat to the local-level colonial order. Nevertheless by 1923 Edouard Marquis, a Saigon-based journalist of Pondicherry origin (he was probably an Indo-European but was a great defender of renouncer causes) could make the following claim:

¹⁰ *Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine: Vol. 1, Recueil des statistiques relatives aux années 1913-1922*, Hanoi: IDEO, 1927, p. 36-37.

There is no one at this time who contests the role of Indochina as a 'Second Metropole'....Powerful and rich in activities of all sorts, brimming with life and seductive in its beauty and resources, Indochina appears... as the centre of a new world where [colonial peoples] must henceforth expend their energy and their vitality.¹¹

It was during the very decade in which he wrote these words, however, that other realities began to intrude upon the dream of a colonial 'new world'. A questioning of the privileges enjoyed by Indians with French citizenship in Cochinchina was an integral part of calls for reform in that colony from the 1920s, and more widespread anti-Indian feeling emerged with the rise of more radical forms of Vietnamese anti-colonialism. Renouncers responded to these pressures by attempts to raise their own profile in order to justify their presence in the colony and by sometimes monitoring and at other times defending the behaviour of other overseas Indians whose fate they now saw as tied to their own. These public relations exercises exposed internal differences but also pressed the French of India to engage more thoughtfully with questions of social and political change taking place both in India and in Vietnamese Indochina. Ultimately however the concerns which preoccupied renouncers and their contemporaries in interwar Cochinchina - expatriate Indian as well as indigenous Vietnamese - made the renouncers' goal of colonial citizenship increasingly less relevant.

Main argument, theory and literature

My claims here are twofold and parallel. Firstly, Indochina, and especially Cochinchina, played a much more significant role in France's colonial venture in India than has previously been acknowledged. Indochina served as an imperial centre drawing from India renouncers whose ambitions to secure the full rights of citizens were allowed, for a time, to flourish in a way they could not do at home in French India. Facilitated by their transfer to another French colonial possession, they were able to have a relatively powerful say in how colonialism was to rule them. Secondly, the French of India merit greater attention than they have been given in the history of colonial Indochina, for their

¹¹ Edouard Marquis, 'Indochine, Métropole seconde', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 21 September 1923.

role in shaping how the people of Indochina, the Vietnamese of Cochinchina in particular, experienced colonialism and fashioned their own calls for change.

Most historians of Vietnam, if they have paused at all to consider the impact of the Indian presence, have commented only on the activities of commercial migrants. Brocheux's remarks on Indian trade and finance in the Mekong Delta go farther than most, extending to some analysis of social relations between the Indian traders and the local population, but they remain scattered observations.¹² Both Ngô Vĩnh Long and Martin Murray provide short analyses of the role of Chettiar moneylenders.¹³ More typical though, is to find brief references, if there is any mention at all, in works addressing Vietnamese anti-colonialism or colonial society more broadly, like David Marr's to the '5000 or so Indian moneylenders and brokers, almost all in Cochinchina'.¹⁴

Furthermore, the rare attempts that do exist to assess the Indians' economic significance often contain misleading descriptions of Indian migrant groups and their activities. This is indicative both of inadequate research on the topic from primary sources and a legacy sown in the colonial era when commentators, be they French or Vietnamese, rarely sought to understand or to accurately describe the complex legal, religious, social and regional categories to which the Indian migrants belonged. Murray's reiteration of an earlier, erroneous, claim that the Chettiar banking caste hailed from French India is one such example, but by no means an isolated one.¹⁵ The most elementary aim of this thesis then, which is fundamental to being able to understand the place and role of renouncers in Indochina, is to clearly distinguish one from the other the diverse array of Indian migrant groups who resided in French Indochina.

If few modern historians of Vietnam have taken a serious interest in the economic impact of Indian business in colonial Vietnam, fewer still have considered the political and social ramifications incurred by the presence in the former Indochina of Indians with

¹² Pierre Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta: Ecology, Economy and Revolution, 1860-1960*, Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1995, pp. 70, 72-74, 77, 80, 87-88, 103, 114, 156-157, 210.

¹³ Ngô Vĩnh Long, *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991 [1973], pp. 88-89; Martin Murray, *The Development of Capitalism in Colonial Indochina (1870-1940)*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 454-455.

¹⁴ David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, p. 24.

¹⁵ Murray, *Development of Capitalism*, p. 454.

French citizenship. Statistical and ethnographic works produced in the period may sometimes mention that a portion of those people classed as 'French' in Indochina were actually of Indian origin. For any more substantial explanation, there is to my knowledge a single account, and that dates back to 1937, which has considered the social and political impact of the presence of the 'French of India' in any depth. Virginia Thompson, in her work on 'French Indo-China', directed her venom at the French 'Hindus' of Cochinchina in particular. While she was astute in her readings of their supposedly venal role in Cochinchinese elections, and Vietnamese resentment towards them, she was also deeply cynical and made no effort to lend any Indian perspective to her views.¹⁶ Post-independence commentators on this group are rarer still. In his analysis of the Mekong Delta Brocheux states in a single paragraph that most of the 'French' in the south were in fact either Corsicans or from French overseas territories. 'Pondicherrians', whose behavior he notes was 'more French than the French', were among them.¹⁷ Ho Tai, in analyses of electoral politics and publishing culture in the south, has made passing note of roles played by Indian French citizens.¹⁸ As with modern commentators on the commercial aspects of the Indian presence, some of these modern works reproduce – presumably for lack of reliable sources – stereotypes and basic errors of fact. This is further evidence of how none of the overseas Indians have ever constituted serious subjects of scholarly study.

While some modern histories of Vietnam contain isolated, and usually untested, claims about Indians in Indochina, other studies point to events and situations in which renouncers or other Indians would surely have been actors, but make no mention of their presence. This is indicative of the way in which, up until very recently, Vietnamese colonial history has been written, as a series of French colonial actions divorced from their actors. This has lent the misleading impression that the actual work of colonising the Vietnamese was carried out strictly by Frenchmen from the Metropole with Chinese traders constituting the only intermediaries of any sort or any consequence. This view has

¹⁶ Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-China*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937, p. 172.

¹⁷ Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta*, p. 104.

¹⁸ See Hue-Tam Ho Tai, 'The Politics of Compromise: The Constitutionalist Party and the Electoral Reforms of 1922 in French Cochinchina', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1984, 371-391 (pp. 387-388); Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 123.

begun to shift, with the appearance of studies which consider more carefully the complex workings of relationships within colonial society, where *métis* (Franco-Vietnamese), women both indigenous and European, Corsicans, inter-regional migrants within the Indochinese Union, and even capricious individuals sought alongside the more familiar players to find their place.¹⁹

Once we know that a significant number of individuals who performed key tasks at every level on behalf of French authority in Indochina were Indians, readers of Osborne on the formation of a French administration, or Ngô Vĩnh Long on tax collection, must be prompted to ask who was actually seated, pen in hand, in the offices of the French administration, or who actually confronted Vietnamese villagers and traders to collect their taxes.²⁰ This thesis not only adds new players to consider in this recent discussion of colonial relationships on the ground, but further engages us in debate about the nature of those interactions. To Zinoman's valuable work on Indochina's prisons can be added the understanding that many of the prison guards were Indian French citizens.²¹ And renouncers battles to defend their 'European'-level privileges reveal that the 'boundaries of rule' often used to describe the positioning of *métis* and of women in colonial society were even more complex than they have been depicted in previous studies.

Aside from the many colonial histories of Vietnam which omit mention of Indian French citizens acting as intermediaries to the French colonialists, modern works on Vietnamese colonial history have equally failed to recognise the explicitly anti-Indian

¹⁹ Examples include Emmanuelle Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie: les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté*, Paris: La Découverte, 2007; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, for Indochina see pp. 61, 79-111; Penny Edwards, 'Womanizing Indochina: Fiction, Nation and Cohabitation in Colonial Cambodia, 1890-1930' In Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds.), *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998, 108-130; Jean-Louis Pretini, 'Saigon-Cyrcos', in Philippe Franchini (ed.), *Saigon 1925-1945 De la 'Belle Colonie' à l'éclosion révolutionnaire ou la fin des dieux blancs*, Paris: Editions Autrement, 1992, 92-103. See also Christopher E. Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution 1885-1954*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999; Christopher E. Goscha, 'Inter-Asian Debates and Intersecting Colonial Encounters in French Indochina: Three Case Studies', *Modern Asian Studies*, forthcoming; and Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001 (which conveys notably the force of individual personalities).

²⁰ Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 61-81; Milton E. Osborne *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia*, Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1997 [1969], pp. 59-88.

²¹ Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille*.

stance of Vietnamese resistance to French colonialism. The writings of Vietnamese who were non-communist resisters or reformers in the south in the first half of the twentieth century were littered with attacks on overseas Indians, some criticised for their undue privilege and others for their economic dominance. Yet while Ralph Smith acknowledged the appeal of Indian models for some Vietnamese who challenged French colonialism, the articles he devoted to non-communist forms of resistance made no mention of Indians.²² Marr's assessment of Vietnamese anti-colonialism is similarly silent, as is Ho Tai's analysis of the rise of Vietnamese radicalism.²³ Other works have fared better in recognising the anti-Indian element in the non-communist literature, but all are prone to some of the errors I mentioned earlier, and none have seriously and extensively examined this aspect.²⁴ The single exception is the work of the southern Vietnamese writer Son Nam. His work, however, looks only at the reform movements in the south of Vietnam in the first decade of the twentieth century. He thus examines Vietnamese attacks on Indian trade interests, but not later Vietnamese responses to the presence and privileges of Indian French citizens in Cochinchina.²⁵

My point is not to chide authors whose main interests lie elsewhere for not putting a small minority group front and centre in their analyses. Rather it is to say that if we know more about the Indians of Indochina, and the actual roles they played, the picture of what was happening on the ground changes significantly. While not wishing to downplay the injustices suffered by peoples subject to colonial rule, paying closer attention to intermediary actors displaces the idea of an 'omnipotent' West and allows

²² R.B. Smith, 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party in French Cochinchina, 1917-1930', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1969, 131-150; R.B. Smith, 'The Development of Opposition to French Rule in Southern Vietnam 1880-1940', *Past and Present*, vol. 54, 1972, 94-129; R.B. Smith, 'The Vietnamese Elite of French Cochinchina', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1972, 459-482.

²³ David Marr, *Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism, 1885-1925*, Berkeley: University of California, 1971; Ho Tai, *Radicalism*.

²⁴ See Pierre Brocheux, 'Note Sur Gilbert Chiêu (1867-1919), Citoyen Français et Patriote Vietnamien', *Approches Asie*, 11, 1991, 72-81 (p. 74); Philippe Peycam, 'Intellectuals and Political Commitment in Vietnam: The Emergence of a Public Sphere in Colonial Saigon (1926-1933)', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1999, p. 34.

²⁵ See Son Nam, *Đất Gia Định - Bến Nghé Xưa và Người Sài Gòn* [Gia Định Soil; Old Bến Nghé; People of Saigon], Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 2004 [three volumes first published respectively 1984, 1992 and 1992], pp. 392-393; Son Nam, *Phong Trào Duy Tân ở Bắc Trung Nam, Miền Nam Đầu Thế Kỷ XX - Thiên Địa Hội và Cuộc Minh Tân* [The Duy Tân movement in the North, Centre and South; The South in the Twentieth Century; The Heaven and Earth Society; The Minh Tân Organisation], Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 2003 [originally two volumes, 1975 and 1971 respectively], pp. 35-39, 220-224.

for a more nuanced view of the effects of European domination. Indigenous people, including these intermediaries, did not merely remain subordinate actors following the advent of European power, but were much more active than is sometimes assumed in bringing about economic, social and political developments, in Southeast Asia as in India. The notion of an all-powerful French colonial state in Indochina must be diminished when it is seen to have been implemented in part by actors who, aside from the agenda of their French colonial masters, actively pursued their own concerns. Vietnamese experiences of colonialism too, were not typically characterised by direct relations between Vietnamese and their colonial masters. They could be experiences filtered through and complicated by contacts with intermediaries. By introducing the Indian enclave community – or communities, of which the renouncers are my central topic – into the study of French Indochina, this thesis proposes a fundamental shift in perspective. A significant part of French colonial power, especially in Cochinchina, was exercised on the ground by Indians from the French possessions, and their presence, as well as that of other Indians, was an important force which helped to shape Vietnamese anti-colonialism.

Having said that the overseas Indians in Indochina comprise a neglected topic of study, and that what information exists on the Indians frequently suffers from inaccuracies taken from other secondary sources, research on the topic is not completely non-existent. A handful of articles attempt to describe Indian migrant communities in Indochina. The earliest is that written by G. Vidy in 1949, which clearly benefits from his first-hand research among the Indian population in Saigon at the time.²⁶ Two others, by V.M. Reddi and Nayan Chanda, provide background information on the colonial period, but concern themselves mainly with the situation of Indians following the communist takeover of the south in 1975.²⁷ Chanda's is the strongest, benefiting from his first-hand experience as a journalist in South Vietnam during the American War. Claude Marius has written a valuable account of Pondicherrians in the colonial administration of Indochina,

²⁶ G. Vidy, 'La communauté indienne en Indochine', *Sud-Est*, no. 6, November 1949, 1-8.

²⁷ V.M. Reddi, 'Indians in the Indochina States and their Problems', in I.J. Bahadur Singh (ed.), *Indians in South East Asia*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd, 1982, 155-158; Chanda, 'Indians in Indochina', in K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani, (eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Times Academic Press, ISEAS, 1993, 31-45.

based on his own experiences and memories growing up in Saigon.²⁸ JPB More provides a general overview in one article, and focuses more narrowly in another on South Asian Muslims in Indochina.²⁹ In both cases he adds to the works available by drawing on new sources, in the former case French and Tamil language newspapers published in colonial Saigon and in the latter, interviews with Muslims in Pondicherry and Karikal recalling their experiences in Indochina. Nasir Abdoule-Carime has drawn on many of these previous articles, as well as some French archival sources, in a preface written for an online publication of Vidy's 1949 article.³⁰ My own contribution, the entry for Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in the recently published *Encyclopaedia of the Indian Diaspora*, taps several previously unexamined sources, but can be counted among these overviews.³¹

Finally, among works which directly address the subject of Indians in Indochina, both the renouncers and the Chettiars, (the migrant money lending caste from Chettinad in Tamil Nadu), have comprised in the last few years the subjects of theses at French universities.³² Although my own analysis does not accord with the approach or the conclusions reached by either of these studies, both are valuable attempts to begin searching the French colonial archive at Aix-en-Provence for what it can reveal of the Indian presence in Indochina.

These few articles and short studies which directly address the subject of Indian migrants to Cochinchina, however, have barely begun to tap into primary sources on the subject. With a few exceptions, they tend to repeat material from existing articles. Furthermore, they tend to present the overseas Indians as a migrant minority group - or

²⁸ Claude Marius, 'Les Pondichériens dans l'administration coloniale de l'Indochine', in J. Weber (ed.), *Les relations entre la France et l'Inde de 1673 à nos jours*, Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2002, 391-398.

²⁹ J.B.P. More, 'Indians in French Indochina', in K.S. Mathew (ed.), *French in India and Indian Nationalism (1700 A.D. - 1963 A.D.)*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1999, 447-460; J.B.P. More, 'Pathan and Tamil Muslim Migrants in French Indochina', *Pondicherry University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, vol. 1, nos. 1 and 2, 2000, 113-128.

³⁰ Nasir Abdoule-Carime, 'Les communautés indiennes en Indochine', published online in Paris by the Association d'échanges et de Formation pour les Etudes Khmeres, 2003, <http://aefek.free.fr/lecture.htm>.

³¹ Natasha Pairaudeau, 'Indo-china: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia', in Brij V. Lal (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, in association with National University of Singapore, 2006, 200-203.

³² Nadia Leconte, 'La migration des Pondichériens et des Karikalais en Indochine ou le combat des Indiens-renonçants en Cochinchine pour la reconnaissance de leur statut (1865-1954)', unpublished master's thesis (*maîtrise*), Université de Haute-Bretagne Rennes 2001; Christelle Brun, 'Chettys, prêteurs d'argent indiens et l'économie indochinoise (1880-1940)', unpublished DEA thesis, Aix-en-Provence [?], 2003.

rather sub-groups - existing as self-contained, bounded entities. I will return to this problem later in discussing approaches to migration studies. Although mention is made in some of these works of the political and social currents generated both by the Indians' presence in a foreign land and their removal from their own place of origin, the full implications of these currents are not grasped.

There are several explanations for the general lack of attention to the Indian presence in studies of Vietnamese history. Firstly, Vietnam, like other post-colonial states, was susceptible to the tendency to deny the role played by other peoples in its development.³³ Following Vietnam's independence, Vietnamese and Western historians alike emphasised national unity in the fight against French colonial repression, while downplaying both the ways in which colonialism was actually organised and ethnic, religious and regional differences within the country.³⁴ The resulting neglect of the roles of the many different peoples within the bounds of the newly independent state is only just being corrected by a renewed interest in restoring the diversity, particularly of the Mekong Delta, to the historical record. Certain Vietnamese authors writing histories of the south have long admitted the region's ethnic diversity and cultural complexity, albeit more cautiously in the late 1970s and 1980s. The re-printing in the last two decades of works written by writer Sơn Nam and historian Vương Hồng Sển are evidence of this renewed interest in such views of history within Vietnam, and of their renewed political acceptability.³⁵ Evidence among scholars based outside of Vietnam can be found in works such as Nola Cook and Li Tana's edited volume on pre-colonial trade relations on the 'Water Frontier' of the Mekong Delta, and Philip Taylor's two recent books on popular religion in the south and Cham Muslims.³⁶ This thesis aims to add to these efforts

³³ See Claudine Salmon, 'The Contribution of the Chinese to the Development of Southeast Asia: A New Appraisal', in *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1981, 260-275 (p. 261).

³⁴ On this point see Pierre Brocheux, *Mekong Delta*, p. xvii; also Patricia M. Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam: new histories of the national past*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

³⁵ Sơn Nam, *Phong Trào Duy Tân*; Sơn Nam, *Đất Gia Định*; Vương Hồng Sển, *Sai Gon Năm Xưa* [Saigon in the Past], Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2003 [1960].

³⁶ Nola Cook and Li Tana, eds., *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004; Philip Taylor, *Goddess on the Rise: Pilgrimage and Popular Religion in Vietnam*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004; Philip Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2007.

to expand the scholarly field of vision beyond an narrow nationalist and singularly ethnic Vietnamese perspective.

A second reason for the neglect of the Indians in the Vietnamese historiography stems from the assumption that, because the Indian migrant population lagged so far behind that of the overseas Chinese in size, the Indian impact was therefore insignificant. Yet the overseas Indian presence in colonial Vietnam, especially the presence of Indians with French citizenship, was so different from that of the Chinese that comparing the size of migrant populations is irrelevant. Granted, both Chinese and Indian commercial migrants posed a threat of economic dominance. Granted too, the Chinese portion of that threat was much larger, despite the disproportionate financial power wielded by some Indians (moneylenders, merchants and property owners, some of whom were Indians with French citizenship). It is the significance of their privileged status in Indochina, however, that separates the overseas Indians, and especially the Indian French citizens, from the overseas Chinese. Chinese status in French Indochina was more or less the same as that of the local population until they acquired special privileges under the Nanking Treaty in 1930.³⁷ Moreover, their status was formed less by their own pursuit of privilege as by negotiations between their home government and the French state, with the Chinese government, as Marsot has observed, taking a greater interest in its overseas migrants only when it was in need of political support at home.³⁸ The Indian French citizens, unlike the Chinese but akin to their Vietnamese hosts, were peoples colonised by France who had a stake in the logic of how it was to rule over them. They used the leverage afforded to them as 'displaced colonials' to make of Indochina, and especially Cochinchina, an arena in which to seek status and privilege for themselves and advance their own social and political agendas within the French Empire. The possibilities for Chinese as opposed to Indian migrants to manoeuvre under French colonialism were fundamentally different. This holds true for French citizens, but also with regard to Indian French subjects and British Indians too, who were both 'assimilated' in some respects with Europeans and retained certain 'European' privileges which were not given

³⁷ Alain G. Marsot, *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French*, Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993, p. 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

to the Chinese. The positioning of Chinese as compared to Indians in turn created different forms of resentment on the part of the Indochinese: resentment primarily of economic privilege in the former case, and of privilege (especially of the French citizens) in the latter. These resentments were then coloured by the cultural affinities which the ethnic Vietnamese were taken to share with the Chinese as against supposed cultural and racial differences with the Indians.³⁹

Thirdly, the neglect of the role of Indian migrants in Indochina's French colonial history may be attributed to a lack of wider regional perspectives in the study of Southeast Asia's past. Regional connections in Southeast Asian historiography tend to disappear, as Christopher Goscha has observed, at the beginning of the colonial era. Such connections fall victim, as do ethnic and cultural diversity, to the use of either colonial-states (for historians of empire) or nation states (for nationalist historians) as the units of analyses.⁴⁰ Both Denis Lombard and Claudine Salmon, as Goscha notes, have argued persuasively that Southeast Asia and southern China should be considered as one region.⁴¹ This approach has been put into practice for the Mekong Delta region notably in Cook and Li's edited volume, cited earlier.⁴² Scholarship on (British) India has also been enriched by the relatively recent work of 'regional thinkers'. Christopher Baker called for the need to recognise the huge interregional movements created with European colonialism between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia from the late nineteenth century; subsequent authors have put forward notions of a cosmopolitan Indian Ocean arena, and of British India as an outward-looking centre of imperial authority.⁴³ Regional

³⁹ Ibid., p. 12, 41; Pierre Brocheux, 'Vietnamiens et minorités en Cochinchine pendant la période coloniale', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1972, 443-437 (p.452); Brocheux, *Mekong Delta*, pp. 102-103.

⁴⁰ Goscha, *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks*, pp. 4-5.

⁴¹ Salmon, 'Contribution of the Chinese'; Denis Lombard, 'Another 'Mediterranean in Southeast Asia', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, vol. 1, 2007, 3-9.

⁴² Cook and Tana eds., *Water Frontier*.

⁴³ C.J. Baker, 'Economic Reorganization and the Slump in South and Southeast Asia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1981, 325-349; Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: Indian in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007; see also Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly, eds. *Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

connections that take in nodes of French influence, however, have yet to be adequately identified.⁴⁴

Justice cannot be done to the story of Indian French citizens, or any of colonial Indochina's resident Indians for that matter, without an approach that addresses such connections. The story is about the movement of people, but it is as much about the circulation and testing of ideas, colonised peoples' ideas about what shape colonial rule might take, as these ideas move between two places. The shift in perspective which this thesis contributes to understandings of ground-level relationships in colonial Indochina is also an effort, which joins others, to restore to studies of the Mekong Delta the ethnic and cultural diversity which Vietnamese nationalist historiography has tended to omit. It attempts too, to make regional connections and moreover, to think of these connections as opportunities to exchange ideas, not only goods and labour.

While the role of Indian French citizens in Indochina cannot be discussed adequately within the boundaries of either Indochina or French India alone, the bounds of the French colonial empire do provide us with some kind of geographical unit of analysis. The story of renouncers in Indochina is one strand of a long series of debates over citizenship, equality and the universal rights of man which took place within the French empire. These debates reach back to the Haitian revolution, are joined in the mid to late nineteenth century by discussions in Algeria and Senegal as well as French India over assimilationist policies, and continue through the 1950s in the struggles of labour movements in French West Africa.⁴⁵ As CLR James' analysis of the Haitian revolution showed so succinctly, the values of the French revolution were not exported wholesale to its overseas possessions, but were worked out as much through debates within the

⁴⁴ See Singaravélou, 'Indians in the French overseas Departments: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion', in Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach and Steven Vertovec (eds.), *South Asians Overseas. Migration and Ethnicity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 75-87.

⁴⁵ See C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint l'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, Tiptree, Essex: Allison and Busby, 1989 [1938]; Michael Brett, 'Legislating for Inequality in Algeria: The *Senatus-Consulte* of 14 July 1865', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1988, 440-461; Mamadou Diouf, 'The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the *Originaires* of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalisation Project', *Development and Change*, no. 29, 1998, 671-696; Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilise: The Republican idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997; and for labour movements in West Africa, Chapter Seven of Frederick Cooper *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, pp. 204-230.

colonies themselves and between the colonies and the Metropole. In addition, colonial peoples often sought political voice within the institutions of the French empire, rather than calling for independence.⁴⁶ The assertion of Indian French citizens' rights within the French empire was worked out through a particularly elaborate process, in which the French possessions in India, the Metropole and Indochina were all involved. Renouncers used the leverage available to them as residents of a French colony other than their own to argue for the recognition of their status. This movement within the French empire is both essential to the story, and answers nicely to the criticism, similar to that which I have discussed above launched against Vietnamese and Southeast Asian historiography, that 'colonial historiography has been so nationally bound that it has blinded us to those circuits of knowledge and communication that took routes other than those shaped by the Metropole-colony axis alone'.⁴⁷

Yet if the story I present here is bounded by the French Empire, it is hard to contain within those borders. Indians from the French possessions who were resident in Indochina, whether they were citizens or subjects of France, were always closely involved with and strongly associated with migrants who hailed from parts of India under British rule. This was because they often practiced the same faiths, followed the same professions, or shared a common language. And beyond these shared religious, social and cultural elements, the borders between the bulk of British India and the tiny, fragmented French *comptoirs* contained within it were highly porous. It was relatively easy, (and often desirable, for reasons of trade or marriage), for Indians who were ostensibly British to enter and reside in French territory.⁴⁸ Among those who went to work and live in Indochina those who presented themselves as 'French' may have had any number of ties with British India, and their 'Frenchness' may well have been of very recent date.

Colonial historiography's blind spot for circuits throughout and between colonial empires explains why the rare mention of an Indian presence in Indochina is found in

⁴⁶ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ 'Introduction' in F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire; Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, p. 28.

⁴⁸ William F.S. Miles, *Imperial Burdens: Countercolonialism in Former French India*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 5.

works whose main concern is not the colonial period but its afterlife among immigrants from the colonies now settled in France. Pierre-Jean Simon's anthropological research in refugee camps in rural France in the 1970s revealed that the French citizens of Indochina who had been 'repatriated' there included Indians from the French possessions and Indo-Vietnamese alongside naturalised Vietnamese, Lao and Khmer.⁴⁹ Raymond Delval's study of Indian Muslims in France showed that many of those Muslims who hail from French India arrived in France directly from Indochina, and include Indo-Vietnamese.⁵⁰ Similarly, Brigitte Sebastia, in a thesis on the religious practices of 'Pondicherrians' residing in the Paris region today points out that many of these ethnically Tamil immigrants came to France via Indochina.⁵¹

These weaknesses in colonial and national history explain too, why Pondicherry and Karikal's colonial relationship with Indochina is left lying dormant in historical studies of French India in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Although taken to be the authoritative work on French India in this period, Jacques Weber's *Pondichéry et les comptoirs de l'Inde après Dupleix* devotes a whole chapter to migration of indentured labour from Pondicherry to the Antilles and the Mascarenes, but omits any mention of the circuit between Pondicherry and Karikal, and the territories of Indochina.⁵²

Indochina looms large over studies of the French Establishments from the late nineteenth century, but never pulls into focus. Weber quotes a doctor in the 1930s attributing the spread of malaria into Pondicherry's French quarter to an influx both of Bengali political refugees and 'French *Hindous* who have enriched themselves in Indochina'.⁵³ Describing the development of a French language education system in the French Establishments, he states that: 'Opportunities were sought in Indochina for young

⁴⁹ Pierre-Jean Simon, *Rapatriés d'Indochine: Un village franco-indochinois en Bourbonnais*, Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 1981.

⁵⁰ Delval, *Musulmans français*.

⁵¹ Brigitte Sébastia, 'Les Pondichérriens de l'Ile de France. Etude des pratiques sociales et religieuses', unpublished DEA thesis, Toulouse, 1999.

⁵² Jacques Weber, *Pondichéry et les comptoirs de l'Inde après Dupleix : La démocratie au pays des castes*, Paris : Denoel, 1996.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 344.

graduates of [Pondicherry's] colonial college, the *collège Calvé* and the Schools of Law and Medicine'.⁵⁴ He points out that one of Pondicherry's political activists of the 1920s, Saigon Chinniah, 'owed his name to a long stay in Indochina'.⁵⁵ Yet in none of these cases does he elaborate further. Another author, Paul Michalon, comes closer to grasping Indochina's significance when, in his analysis of the place of renouncers in Pondicherry society, he describes Indochina as an 'escape route' but he too, does not pursue this in any greater detail.⁵⁶

My critique of Weber's work must be tempered by the observation that his is the only history which comprehensively (barring this bald omission) covers the late colonial period in French India. The few other works which address this period are short books or articles by local historians, which often blend personal memoirs with the wider history. These works are oddities in the sense that the authors themselves had often lived in Indochina but never connected their presence there to the history they were writing. Evariste Dessama's Saigon-published *Tribulations de l'Inde Française* is one such example; Arthur Annasse's *Les Comptoirs Français* is another.⁵⁷ Annasse followed a long legal career in Indochina before taking up his pen. Although he mentions his time in Indochina with sentiment and great pride, he, like Weber, does not incorporate the significance of Indochina into his historical analysis. A chapter on political agitation in Pondicherry, for example, opens with Annasse stating how he was employed at the tribunal in the Mekong Delta town of Mỹ Tho when the Second World War broke out. He describes being mobilised to the coastal town of Cap St Jacques and returning on weekends to his family in Saigon. He takes it for granted that he should be in Saigon, and that political agitation in Pondicherry was tightly linked with the presence of himself and other Indians resident in Cochinchina, but he does not explain.⁵⁸ Mathias Clairon, a Pondicherry lawyer based in Saigon, wrote a legal study whose main purpose was to establish beyond a doubt that the act of renunciation conferred French citizenship. The

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 349.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 331.

⁵⁶ Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', pp. 39, 46.

⁵⁷ Evariste Dessama, *Tribulations de l'Inde française*, Saigon: France Asie, 1950; Arthur Annasse, *Les comptoirs français dans l'Inde (Trois siècles de présence française)*, Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1975.

⁵⁸ Annasse, *Les comptoirs*, p. 141.

legal cases he cites to that end were overwhelmingly brought by renouncers residing in Cochinchina, yet he too considers this fact to be unremarkable.⁵⁹ The one exception to this rule is the agronomist and journalist Claude Marius, whose article I have already mentioned and who has noted Weber's omission before me.

Because my thesis addresses the plight of Indian French citizens in Indochina, it is important to note, too, that the analyses we have of the French possessions in India from the late nineteenth century are written as if the relevance of renunciation, the means through which they obtained their citizenship, was confined to French India.⁶⁰ Weber plays down the significance of 'renunciation' in the French Establishments.⁶¹ Michalon concludes similarly that renunciation was a 'relative failure' and that renouncers in Pondicherry remained a 'small, marginalised minority'.⁶² As this thesis demonstrates, these claims by no means hold true for Indians resident in Indochina. The meaning of renunciation, one can argue, was more actively debated outside of French India than inside, and renouncers in Indochinese society could not, as a whole, be described as marginalised. My contribution to the historical literature on French India then, is to bring to light this extraterritorial life of the French Indian facility of 'renunciation' and its adherents.

I do not set out in this thesis to undertake an extended comparison between British and French modes of intervention in the Indian social order, or to engage deeply with debates in British colonial history about 'knowledge as power'. The topic merits a thesis in itself, but given the energy with which it has been debated by scholars of British India, it cannot go unmentioned here.⁶³ There are fundamental differences in the way in which

⁵⁹ M. Clairon, *La renonciation au statut personnel dans l'Inde Française*, Montpellier: Causse, Graille et Castelnaud, 1926, p. 81.

⁶⁰ See Jacques Weber, 'Accumulation et assimilation dans les Etablissements de l'Inde la caste et les valeurs de l'occident', conference proceedings, CRASOM XXXVIII – 2- 3 February 1978; Anasse, *Les comptoirs*, p. 122-124; Also see Miles, *Imperial Burdens*, pp. 40-41.

⁶¹ Weber, 'Accumulation et assimilation', pp. 190, 209

⁶² Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', pp. 102-103.

⁶³ The central arguments are found in Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996 and Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind, Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003. Examples of challenges to the claim that caste as a product of the colonial encounter was virtually 'invented' by the British can be found in Guha, Sumit, 'The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India, c. 1600-1990', *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, vol. 20, 2003, 148-167;

Indian society developed under British rule and the paths it took in the much smaller enclaves ruled by the French. For the British in India, instruments employed for the purposes of 'knowing and ordering' the peoples of the subcontinent were important tools in the exercise of colonial power. The census enumerated India's peoples and created systematic caste, ethnic and religious categories while colonial ethnography tended to emphasise the immutable characteristics of ethnic 'types'. These were no mere descriptive exercises. On the basis of this body of knowledge political franchise was granted, or denied, to specific sectors of Indian society; while groups were classified as deserving of special treatment or conversely as criminals; and selected 'races' exclusive of all others were considered suitable for recruitment into privileged positions in the colonial administration, the Indian military, and its police forces, both in India and abroad. A further consequence of the British generation of knowledge about India was the self-conscious deployment of this knowledge by Indians themselves. By the late nineteenth century caste-based movements and other social organisations were striving to generate and receive official sanction for favourable depictions of their castes in order to press for political concessions or preferment in employment.⁶⁴

France, like Britain, engaged in counting, categorising and studying the customs and habits of the peoples it colonised in India. Indeed, some of India's most prominent colonial ethnographers were French. However, the introduction of universal electoral franchise in the French Establishments in the late nineteenth century, and the creation shortly thereafter of a group of 'renouncers' whose lives were, ostensibly, no longer ruled by caste and other indigenous customs, meant that caste and creed were much less salient categories than they were in British India.⁶⁵ Preferment for the public service and the military in French India, as well as in the French overseas empire, was given not on the basis of caste qualities. French citizenship, rather, made Indians eligible for certain types

Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁶⁴ On these various themes see R.E. Frykenberg, *Guntur District 1788-1848. A history of local influence and central authority in southern India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 168-228; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994, ch. 1, esp. 23-35; David Washbrook, 'The Development of Caste Organisation in South India' in C. J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook (eds.) *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, Meerut: Macmillan of India, 1975, 150-203. See also Bayly, *Caste, Politics and Society*.

⁶⁵ Gupta, 'Citizens of French India', pp. 166, 170-171.

of employment. Moreover, people's efforts to advance themselves in society were not organised to the same extent around caste belonging. Politics in French India, since the introduction of universal franchise, was not a struggle between people of different castes and creeds but between the 'Indian' party, representing 'indigenous' values, and the 'French' party, which included Indians who had chosen French citizenship.⁶⁶ It was not that France refrained from generating knowledge about the people over whom it ruled in India, but rather that it did not use these categories as forcefully as did the British as the bases for social and political advancement. Although I do not enter deeply into comparisons with British India, I bring these up where they are relevant. The thesis in itself rests as an attempt to shed light from an unaccustomed angle on the efforts of colonial powers to reorder Indian society.

Movements of people from the Indian subcontinent to colonial Southeast Asia, let alone to points elsewhere, was so diverse that it is difficult to make generalisations about a single flow of migrants or a 'unitary diaspora'.⁶⁷ Equally, efforts to develop comprehensive descriptions about, or theories around, migratory movements have often proven unsatisfactory.⁶⁸ A common approach has been to seize upon the migrants' work as the organising force underlying their movement and existence overseas, as evidenced by a large body of work addressing long distance trade, another treating indentured labour and a third, (albeit less well-established as a field of study), focussed on the study of 'sub-imperial auxiliaries', migrants serving in colonial administrations and security forces outside of their place of origin.⁶⁹ Approaching my material through the migrants' employment overseas has, however, been of limited help in getting to the core of the particular history I seek to convey here. Indians who stirred the most debate and controversy while resident in Indochina were 'renounced' Indians whose contested

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 171.

⁶⁷ See Claude Markovits, 'Indian Merchant Networks outside India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Preliminary Survey', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1999, 883-991, pp. 4-6.

⁶⁸ See for example Ravindra K. Jain, *Indian Communities Abroad: Themes and Literature*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1993, especially ch. 3; Clarke, Peach and Vertovec (eds.), *South Asians Overseas*, (introduction).

⁶⁹ For one overview of the literature on long distance trade from the Indian subcontinent, see Markovits, *Global World*, pp. 20-24; on indenture Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: the Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920*, London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, 1974; Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*, London: Leicester University Press, 1996; Metcalf's *Imperial Connections* provides a useful overview of arguments and literature pertaining to sub-imperial auxiliaries (administrators, policemen, and soldiers although he also includes indentured labourers in this category).

citizenship status, rather than the work they undertook, was the defining feature of their presence overseas. While they were mostly men helping to administer, secure and police Cochinchina on behalf of the French state, some merchants, landowners, small businessmen and petty traders were also included within their ranks. There was notably no Indian contract labour in Indochina, although it was briefly considered in the late 1920s.⁷⁰ The nature of the renouncers' employment in Indochina is relevant and necessary for understanding the central story in this thesis. That central story, however, is about the migrants not as source of labour or a commercial force. It is about actors both developing social and political agendas over long distances (between their home country and their host territory but also with detours through the Metropole) and playing a role in shaping the social perceptions and agendas for political reform of the indigenous people of the host country.

Studies of migrations generated by late nineteenth and early twentieth century European colonisation, and the postcolonial afterlives of the same migrant groups have been criticised for a tendency to study migrants as 'bounded units' or 'minorities', thereby ignoring their roles in the making of their host societies, and the networks and connections tying them to their places of origin.⁷¹ Related to this criticism is the difficulty that studies of long-distance migrations, in both history and anthropology, have encountered in coping with processes of change. Markovits has urged us to consider that 'movements of people between South Asia and the rest of the world belong to the sphere of 'circulation' rather than 'migration''.⁷² There is much evidence to suggest that we should accept this proposition, not only for merchants but for overseas Indians in many other types of employment, and not only for the people who physically travelled these circuits, but for the notions they carried back and forth with them. It is necessary as a consequence to acknowledge that most migrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a much more global outlook than is often assumed. The idea that migrants, once arrived at their destination, were (or still are) engaged only in processes of either

⁷⁰ See IOL L/E/7/1530 (554/1928) Request from French government to send British Indian workers to Madagascar and Indo-China, 8 February 1928.

⁷¹ On this point see Falzon, Mark-Anthony, *The Sindhi Diaspora 1860-2000*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 12; Salmon, 'Contribution of the Chinese', p. 260.

⁷² Markovits, *Global World*, p. 5.

cultural retention or cultural adaptation is far too limiting.⁷³ Indian French citizens in Cochinchina were engaged in more complicated transfers of ideas and it is these transfers of ideas which are at the forefront of their story.

In short, it was the circuit established (the electrical analogy is the proper one here) rather than a vector running from A to B, which properly describes what happened between French India and French Indochina in this period. For this reason, scholarship which emphasises interregional connections has provided me with stronger guidance than studies from the field of migration or 'diaspora'. To works such as those, previously mentioned, by Baker, Salmon and Lombard (the latter two of which are essentially reflections on approaches to Chinese immigration), I would add Susan Bayly's recent article on 'Greater India' which points to the influence of Indian thinkers on their compatriots overseas, and Metcalf's study of British India as an outward-looking source of imperial ambition.⁷⁴ Collectively, these works emphasise the importance, not so much of studying colonial migration, but of widening the geographic range within which colonialism is studied. Looked at from the field of migration or diaspora studies, the historiographical weaknesses I have discussed so far (in Vietnamese history, in the history of French India and in the study of colonialism more widely) and which lay the blame on the restrictions which nationally-bound analyses impose, actually point to the failure of such approaches to acknowledge the profound political, social, and cultural impacts of movements across colonies and regions. The movement of Indian French citizens to Indochina from the late nineteenth century drove two main processes of change. Renouncers used their position abroad to advance their own social and political agenda, and their presence coloured indigenous experiences of colonialism and reactions to it. The advance this thesis proposes to offer in the study of migration is to bring these impacts to the fore.

⁷³ See Jain, *Indian Communities Abroad* and the introduction to Clarke, Peach and Vertovec, *South Asians Overseas* for approaches of this type.

⁷⁴ Susan Bayly, 'Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2004, 703-744; Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*.

Sources and methodology

Just as my aim has been to understand social and political relationships developed over long distances, so the story has had to be pieced together from sources in several different localities, emphasising the geographic discontinuity in the lives of Indochina-connected Indians which continues up to the present day. I relied on archive and library holdings in five countries and took every opportunity along the way to interview Indians connected to Indochina through their family history, or people with first-hand experience and memories of the Indian presence in colonial Indochina.

Among the archives I visited, the Vietnamese National Archives Number Two (*Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia II*, hereafter VNA2) in Ho Chi Minh City was an especially rich source of information about the daily lives of Indian migrants, especially those who worked for the Cochinchinese administration. It also proved a valuable source, through official correspondence at lower administrative levels, of local-level detail related to debates surrounding the electoral and civil status of Indian French citizens in Cochinchina. The French colonial archives at Aix-en-Provence (*Archives nationales d'outre mer*, or ANOM) proved to be an equally rewarding source of information, this time for higher-level government decisions related to these same debates, and Indian strategies of appealing directly to the Metropole.

Although a less rewarding source than the Ho Chi Minh City based archive, several holdings in the National Archive Number One in Hanoi (*Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia I*, hereafter VNA1) also provided useful insights into the lives of overseas Indians. Similar to the National Archive Number Two, collections in the Hanoi archive (from the Municipalities of Hanoi and Haiphong, and for the Residencies of Annam and Tonkin) contain material which reveals the local level intrigues in the lives of Indians resident in Vietnamese Indochina. Hanoi's holdings from offices of the Governor General of Indochina (GGI) also contained some material related to higher level decisions making related to Indians which were not available in Aix or Ho Chi Minh City. The relative importance of Cochinchina as a much larger centre of Indian immigration is reflected however, in the relatively limited number of relevant documents available in this archive.

Holdings in Pondicherry at the National Archives of India Record Centre (NAIP) revealed the roles played over many decades by local government in French India in administering the constant circulation of people between the French Establishments and French Indochina. These ranged from managing the assignment of soldiers, to the payment of *délégations* and pensions to relatives of Indians employed in Indochina.

Other archives consulted were helpful sources of supporting material. They included the Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères*, AMAE), the French National Archive (*Centre d'accueil et de recherche des Archives nationales*, CARAN), the National Archives of Cambodia, Phnom Penh (NAC); the Paris-based archives of the *Missions Étrangères*; the archive of the League of Human Rights, Nanterre (*Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*, LDH), and in London the India Office Library within the British Library (IOL) and the British National Archive at Kew (BNA). Of particular note was the National Archive of Cambodia which holds documents relating to the small Indian population, including some key renouncer 'personalities', who resided there. Documents in this archive also revealed some of the ways in which Indians residing in Cochinchina were linked to affairs across the border in Cambodia, including claims on land concessions. Neither of the London-based archives yielded much relevant material for the time period covered in this thesis, but both searches were fruitful in that they filled in many of the details of the wartime and immediate post World War Two lives of (mainly British) Indians in Indochina. Finally, Indochina-based renouncers occasionally appealed to the League of Human Rights in France and some of their complaints are still held in the archive kept by this organisation.

In addition to these archival sources I have drawn on newspapers published by the non-communist opposition in Cochinchina in the first half of the twentieth century, some published in Vietnamese and others in French, and French language newspapers published by overseas Indians in Saigon in the same period. The former are sources which have been little tapped for their anti-Indian content, while scholars working in Vietnam have yet to realise that the latter were published by Indians from the French

Establishments and were specifically aimed at a French-speaking Indian readership. I consulted newspaper holdings in the Hanoi National Library (*Thư Viện Quốc Gia Việt Nam*), the Hanoi Institute of Social Sciences Library (*Thư viện Khoa học xã hội*), and the General Sciences Library, Ho Chi Minh City, (*Thư Viện Khoa Học Tổng Hợp*). I also made use, in Paris, of the *Documentation Française* and the holdings at the *Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales* (INALCO) and in Pondicherry, of libraries at the *Institut Français* and the *Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, to consult administrative, legal and statistical yearbooks, and colonial writings related to both Indochina and India.

Findings from official sources and printed documents were supplemented by interviews in Vietnam, India, and France with people recalling childhood memories or recounting family histories related to the Indian presence in Indochina. It has not always been possible to incorporate the oral histories generated by these interviews into my study. Some, while gripping stories in themselves, were views of the past too heavily influenced by the circumstances of the present to hold up as serious accounts of history. Memories of the most active periods of debate in the lives of Indian French citizens in Cochinchina at the turn of the twentieth century have been handed down to the generation living today in only the vaguest of terms, if at all. Despite these drawbacks, the interviews conducted were of immense help in bringing the topic to life and furthered my understanding, in particular, of many aspects of social relations and family life. Families generously shared with me their family photographs and in some cases family documents. The tireless explanations by certain interviewees of their complex family trees and even more complicated passages of relatives between India and Indochina allowed for patterns of family life and of circulation to emerge. Anecdotes of ancestors lives in Indochina also provided valuable clues as to where the Indian stories might be unearthed from within the archives.

In Vietnam I spoke to some of the few Indo-Vietnamese remaining in the country. While most can only trace the broadest strokes of their family history back in India, these encounters were valuable for what they conveyed both of the nature of interactions

between Indians and local Vietnamese in the colonial period, and of the afterlife of Indochina's Indians in independent Vietnam. During my time in Vietnam I also pressed many of the older Vietnamese I met for their recollections of the Indian presence in Vietnam under French rule.

Not least, contacts with the descendants of overseas Indians and others who were able to bring the history to life have provided some of the most pleasant and indeed exciting moments in the course of carrying out this research. The small size of the migrant population allows for the names of individuals mentioned in the interviews often to be recognisable from reading in the archives. Between my informants' knowledge of their family history and findings from the archives, we were able to reconnect a few of the ties severed by distance and movement. In this way one informant in Pondicherry was reunited with a copy of the 'Act of Renunciation' of his great-grandfather dating from 1882, a document sitting in the archives in Saigon since the turn of the twentieth century. The family history of another informant was extended by the knowledge that his connections with Indochina began not with his father, as he had assumed, but with his great-grandfather several decades previously.

I am aware of the risk, in relying heavily on official sources, of reproducing biases inherent to those sources. Other sources I have used however - publications produced by Vietnamese or Indians from the French possessions - carry their own, sometimes even stronger, biases. In this respect my multiple discussions with Vietnamese, Indo-Vietnamese and Indians living today who have related to me their views about the Indian presence in Indochina's past, have helped to make me more aware of how I might try to present a balanced view. It is my hope that if any sense of judgement emerges in the chapters which follow, it is only that of the author trying to give a fair and balanced reading of all sides of the story.

Terms and spelling

Nearly every term available to describe the group of people to whom this thesis refers is problematic in one way or another. I refer to the central subjects of this study as

‘Indian French citizens’, or as ‘renouncers’ or ‘renounced Indians’ for the way in which they obtained that citizenship. In Chapter Seven, where I speak about the interwar years when the causes of renouncers and the modest number of Indo-Europeans began to converge, I use the term *Français de l’Inde* or the ‘French of India’. This term indicates a somewhat broader category of French citizens with Indian origins, both renouncers and the small number of Indo-Europeans residing in Indochina. The great majority of *Français de l’Inde* were nevertheless renouncers.

The term ‘Malabar’ is found in some citations from French in this text, and I have kept this term in translation. ‘Malabar’ meant Indians in colonial Indochina, but just which Indians is not always clear. Population figures in some early colonial yearbooks include two separate categories, ‘Malabars’ and ‘Indians’.⁷⁵ Some commentators appear to have used the misnomer strictly for people of ethnic Tamil origin (similar to its misappropriation in the French possessions of the Indian ocean), while for others it referred to overseas Indians more generally.⁷⁶

To distinguish renouncers from overseas Indians with others forms of status, I refer to ‘Indian French citizens’ in contrast to ‘Indian French subjects’ or ‘British Indians’. These usages do not always make for elegant prose but are more precise and less misleading than other terms in use in colonial Indochina (such as ‘Pondicherrian’ to refer to those with French citizenship).

I have not attempted to gloss over the ambiguities inherent in the word ‘créole’, which are borne of late nineteenth century French (and British) anxieties over miscegenation. In French India by the later 1800s, the term *topas* for mixed-blood Indo-Europeans (or usually Indo-Portuguese) had fallen out of favour, and both they and long-time settlers of French origin (some of whom insisted on the pureness of their blood

⁷⁵ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine Française pour l’année 1867*, Saigon: Imprimerie Impériale, p. 50-51.

⁷⁶ See Hugh Tinker, ‘Between Africa, Asia and Europe: Mauritius: Cultural Marginalism and Political Control’, *African Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 304, 1977, 321-337 (p. 324); Marina Carter, ‘Mauritius’ and ‘The Mascarenes, Seychelles and Chagos Islands’, in *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, pp. 273, 264.

despite evidence to the contrary) were called 'créoles'. I use 'créole' for both categories, and make note of individuals' origins where it is relevant.⁷⁷

Pariah was the collective term used in French India to refer to those 'impure' people at the lowest end of the caste hierarchy. I have kept *pariah* rather than introducing more modern terms (untouchable, harijan, dalit).

To refer to the migrants' place of origin, I use either 'French India', 'the French possessions in India', the 'French Establishments in India' as they were formally named or, less formally, the 'French *comptoirs*' (trading posts). In effect, however, my use of 'French India' points to Pondicherry and Karikal on the east coast of India. The migrants came almost exclusively from these two French Establishments located in the Tamil country, and not, or very rarely, from the other three (Mahé, Yanaon or Chandernagore).

Where the region from which the overseas Indians came, or their ethnic and linguistic grouping is at stake, I sometimes refer to them collectively as Tamils. Even here though, I am careful to qualify this, as not all migrants who hailed from the Tamil country were ethnically Tamil, or had Tamil as their native tongue. I have chosen 'India' and 'Indian' over 'South Asian' to indicate more generally peoples originating from within the former confines of the Indian subcontinent. Historically speaking, the people to whom I refer did properly come from 'India' within the time frame in question, and came overwhelmingly from parts of the country that have remained Indian.

The trouble with terminology does not end there. Standard terms in use to express the movement of these people across to Southeast Asia are not quite satisfactory either. Although I use 'diaspora' at some points, I shy away from the term. Although Chinese, Indian (or South Asian) and Hadhramaut 'diasporas' have become standard labels, the original definition, which reaches back to the dispersal of the Jews, too strongly suggests exile to make it fit comfortably with these other 'diasporas'. Arguably, it has become

⁷⁷ See Weber, *Pondicherry*, p. 191; Gupta, 'Citizens of French India', p. 163; For an example of this form of racial denial, see Denise Affonço, *To the End of Hell: One woman's struggle to survive the Khmer Rouge*, London: Reportage Press, 2009, p. 1.

more accepted in the study of commercial networks, starting from Abner Cohen's definition of a trading diaspora as a system greater than its parts, a 'dispersed but highly interconnected community'.⁷⁸ In this sense I concede to its use. 'Migration', however, is not completely satisfactory either because of the suggestion it conveys of settlement, which is far from accurate in the case of all Indochina migrants. For this reason I make use, following Markovits, of 'circulation' and 'movements between' the two places.⁷⁹ I also, following Bayly, employ the terms 'overseas' or 'expatriate' Indians, both of which lend the sense of people residing in a foreign country, possibly but not necessarily in the long term, engaged and yet separated from local society.⁸⁰ However, I fall back occasionally on 'diaspora', 'migrants' and 'migration' for lack of more concise alternatives.

It should be noted that the French *hindou* (or *indou*), as the English *Hindu*, could refer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to Indians as a quasi-national group rather than followers of the Hindu religion. To add to the confusion, the French often called the Hindu religion 'brahmanism'. I have kept the original terms, marked in italics, to indicate where antiquated usages are employed.

For Vietnamese place names and proper names, English language spellings are used when these are well-known and standardised in English. I use the Vietnamese spelling, including diacritical marks, for terms in Vietnamese, and where proper names or place names are less well-known in English. Where Vietnamese authors publishing in western languages have omitted the diacritical marks in their names, I have followed their practice. Efforts to be consistent with the order in which Vietnamese names are presented are confounded by conflicting practices in Vietnam and the West. In Vietnamese usage, the 'surname' is written first, but where American authors of Vietnamese origin have reversed the order of their names to bring them in line with practice in English, I have respected this convention, just as I have kept those names presented in the standard Vietnamese order in their original form.

⁷⁸ Abner Cohen, 'Cultural Strategies in the organization of trading diasporas', in C. Meillassoux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp.10-16.

⁷⁹ Markovits, *Global World*, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Bayly, 'Imagining "Greater India"'.

Indian place names are written in standard English forms. Although there is currently a movement to reform some names and spellings (example Pondicherry to Puducheri, Madras to Chennai) I have kept those which will be familiar to most readers (and which were in use during the period under study). In order to retain the sense of transformation brought about both by renunciation of personal status and by migration to a foreign country, I have made no attempt to provide modern transliterations for Tamil names. Indians often translated their names to French when they 'renounced' (for example 'Pushpanadin' became 'De la Flore), or chose French transliterations of their Tamil names ('Prouchandy' for 'Purushanti'). In official documents some overseas Indians are identified by the transcription of the Vietnamese pronunciation of their name; thus Yakum Sahib went by the name of Yaccoumsah in local circles in Cantho. I have kept the spelling of all names as they were presented in the original documents. All foreign language terms are written in italics.

Periodisation

My study covers the period from approximately 1858 to 1940. 1858 is the first recorded date of an Indian arriving in Indochina with French forces. It might be argued, given that the law enabling Indians from the French possessions to acquire French citizenship came into place only in 1881, that this date would serve as a better starting point for a study whose main concern is the presence of Indian French citizens in Indochina. Failing that, dates in the 1870s linked to the establishment of the Third Republic in France might be more appropriate. I have favoured the beginnings of the colonial era passage of Indians to Indochina over dates marking the start of assimilationist policies in French India under the Third Republic for several reasons. The Third Republic marked for French India the return, rather than the fresh introduction of assimilationist policies. The law on renunciation of personal status in 1881 was the introduction of a formal legal instrument enabling Indians to declare their attachment to the French civil code. Prior to this date some had already done so informally, through, for example, electing to be married according to the French civil code. Such people, included

among them Indians already present in Indochina, already considered themselves to be French citizens, even though this was expressed in only vague terms, prior to 1881. Moreover, as seen in Chapter Four, debates over electoral franchise in Cochinchina ended up being decided over questions of citizenship, but the early participation of Indians from the French Establishments at Cochinchina's ballot boxes was not determined by citizenship and took place well before the renunciation law was laid down in India. Furthermore, in order to properly describe the impetus of Indians to 'renounce' their civil status and take on French citizenship once already present in Indochina, it was necessary to reach back to the beginnings of the wave of migration from French India to French Indochina.

Although Indian French citizens did not leave Indochina for good until the final French departure in 1954, and some even remained until the communist victory over South Vietnam in 1975, renouncers' dream of living as ideal colonial citizens in Indochina was actually on the decline, as I argue in Chapter Seven, throughout the interwar period. 1940 really marks the end point of Indian French citizens' stay in Indochina as colonial-era migrants. When ties between Gaullist Pondicherry and Petain's Cochinchina were severed, communications and remittances from Cochinchina to India were cut off for the duration of the war. In addition, citizenship changes under Vichy and again shortly after the war meant that renunciation itself ceased to have any meaning.⁸¹

Chapter summary

Following this introduction, the second and third chapters set the stage for my analysis. In Chapter Two I explore how the act of 'renunciation' of indigenous personal laws came to be formalised in law in late nineteenth century Pondicherry. I analyse the complex origins, purposes and meanings of this legal faculty which ultimately allowed subjects of French India to acquire French citizenship, and I describe the social profiles

⁸¹ Effects of the Franco-German armistice on Pondicherry and Indochina are described in: *Gouvernement des Etablissements français dans l'Inde, Livre Jaune de l'Inde Française*, Pondicherry: Imprimerie du gouvernement, 1940; For the impact of the Japanese occupation and the French post-war return to Indochina on French Indians see Dairien, Prosper, '9 Mars 1945...Septembre 1946 et les Français et les Français de l'Inde', *Trait d'Union*, vol. 51, no. 10, August 1995.

of those people who chose to 'renounce'. Although renunciation has been described as a social 'movement' in French India of minor importance, I demonstrate how the number of renouncers who migrated to Cochinchina, proportional to the total number of migrants from French India, was significant and I explore the multiple links which tied renouncers to Indochina. The last sections of this chapter are devoted to two comparisons, both of which are vital to develop the main arguments in this thesis. The French Indian entitlement to 'renunciation' is compared to a similar, and yet very different, Cochinchinese decree permitting the *Annamites* of that colony to apply for French citizenship through naturalisation. I then describe the legal status of renouncers in Cochinchina, to which I compare the status of the Indian French subjects and British Indians who were also resident in the colony.

The third chapter examines the range of occupations undertaken by renouncers in Cochinchina in the context of the activities of the wider overseas Tamil population. It aims to further our understanding of renouncer identity in Cochinchina by showing that, while striving to assert their French-ness, they were also embedded in a world of Tamil expatriates. Renouncers typically worked in direct service to the French, most noticeably in the colonial administration, policing and the military. Their presence at ground level meant for the peoples' of Cochinchina that the face of French authority was not always that of a white Frenchman of Metropolitan origin; often, it was a Tamil one. When renouncers sought to make a living outside of their characteristic niches of employment they almost invariably entered occupational fields which were already the preserve of other Tamils. The crossing-over of renouncers into typically 'Tamil' employment, as well as the numerous other ways in which the francophone and Francophile renouncers assisted their fellow Tamils to negotiate through the French colonial state's systems, were the ties holding together a perhaps tenuous but nonetheless coherent Indian overseas community in Cochinchina, one which was distinctly Tamil. In furthering our understanding of the activities of the wider overseas Tamil community, and renouncers' place within it, this chapter provides a foundation for the analysis in subsequent chapters.

My core arguments are laid out in the four subsequent chapters of the thesis. Chapter Four explores the role of Indians from the French Establishments in electoral politics in Cochinchina. It shows how Indians resident in Cochinchina in the late nineteenth century fought to have their political rights endorsed there. Once renouncers had secured political franchise in Cochinchina (their non-renounced compatriots failed to do so), they made full use of it to further advance their position in the colony, even though they were exploited by French politicians in the process. The chapter provides firm evidence nonetheless that colonial peoples could be active agents in themselves and were not always helpless dependents of colonial power. Nor, it demonstrates, were colonies simply 'outposts for policies formulated at home'.⁸²

Chapter Five analyses claims made by Indians employed by the colonial administration in Cochinchina about the terms of their employment. Primarily, they insisted upon their right to access privileges classified within the administration as 'European'. This chapter provides further evidence of renounced Indians actively engaged in defining their own place in the colonial order, but the argument is refined here. Renouncers were not active agents across the board. Education and the cultural competence which came with it meant that some renouncer functionaries were better placed than others to defend challenges to their status as French citizens. By the same token, Indians' insistence that their contractual terms should reflect their status as French citizens posed different types of threats to the social order depending upon their positioning within the administration. Granting contractual privileges to Indians in high and middle ranking posts posed a threat to French prestige, whereas similarly favouring Indians employed in subordinate positions constituted a political danger as it risked offending the sensibilities of Vietnamese colleagues. French authorities in Cochinchina found it much harder to concede privileges to these lower-ranked Indian functionaries.

Vietnamese observers have left no record of their views of renounced Indians' struggles, on Vietnamese soil, to have their citizenship rights recognised in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Despite this early silence, however, Vietnamese commentators were

⁸² Conklin, *Mission to Civilise*, p. 4.

later very vocal in their criticism both of the economic dominance of Indians more generally and of the privileges of renounced Indians specifically. Chapter Six examines a complex catalogue of Vietnamese reactions. Vietnamese non-communist reformers specifically attacked the privileges of renounced Indians, although this was not to come until the 1920s. However, Vietnamese reactions to Indians more generally, regardless of the Indians' legal status, coloured the way in which renouncers were viewed, making the analysis of one inseparable from the other. Revealing an overlooked chapter in the history of Southern Vietnam, Chapter Six considers the reactions of the Cochinchinese elite from the 1900s onwards, as well as popular Vietnamese responses to the Indian presence. Indians did not constitute closed and insignificant minority communities in colonial Indochina. Their presence rather, influenced the ways in which local people in Cochinchina (and to some extent more widely in the Vietnamese territories of Indochina) experienced French occupation. Their presence, and notably that of the Indian French citizens, helped to determine the shape of Vietnamese anti-colonial resistance.

Chapter Seven demonstrates how political stresses from within Indochina and calls for social and political reform at home prompted renounced Indians, and the Indo-French whose interests were now very closely allied with the renouncers, to reorganise and raise their profile, for the benefit of the wider Indian community as well as the Indochinese public. Chapter Seven is a 'double take' in the sense that it considers the reactions of the *Français de l'Inde* to Vietnamese responses to their presence.

My conclusion sums up how the thesis has borne out the two main arguments and assesses the advances it has made in key areas of scholarly thinking. Renouncers made Indochina vitally important to French India from the late nineteenth century because of the way in which they were able to develop social and political agendas over long distances which furthered the recognition of their rights within the French empire. I maintain that the thesis furthers the study of late-colonial migrations from British India by adding the trajectory from French India to Indochina to other better-known itineraries. It advances thinking on migration by illustrating how these movements allowed not just labour and goods to be transferred, but circuits of ideas to be established. It adds forceful

evidence to claims that colonised peoples were not mere passive agents, and it brings to the fore (something often forgotten in nationalist historiography) the struggles of colonised people who fought actively to gain rights within the colonial framework. The thesis reinstates the Indian presence in the colonial history of Vietnam, not only to add to attempts to restore to southern Vietnam its historical social diversity, or to draw attention to little-understood and frequently misrepresented groups. The thesis, I argue, brings new insights to the complexities of colonialism. The presence of Indian French citizens as intermediaries in colonial Indochina, which generated encounters between the Indians and Vietnamese which were outside of French control, highlights not the strengths but some of the inherent weaknesses of colonial rule and its rulers.

Chapter Two: Legal Status and other markers of identity

The present chapter examines the origin and effects of 'renunciation', the means by which Indian French citizens obtained their citizenship. The circumstances through which renunciation, as a legal process, came into being, is part of a wider French colonial policy of native 'assimilation'. Indian reasons for embracing the idea, and French reasons for legally endorsing it are also rooted, however, in local-level social and political causes. The types of Indians who took up the opportunity to become French citizens by forgoing their indigenous legal status, are inextricably linked, for reasons described in this chapter, to Indochina.

Although the larger context for renunciation in the French Establishments was French thinking on the possibilities of legal and social assimilation for its colonised peoples, this project across France's overseas territories was an incredibly uneven one. The comparison I make here between the decree permitting people of Indian origin to renounce their personal status and the decree on French naturalisation relevant to peoples native to colonial Cochinchina firmly demonstrates this. While it is important to examine this legal gulf, which as we shall see later, coloured the relationship between Vietnamese and overseas Indian French citizens, it is equally important to understand the status and social identities of renouncers in relation to the social profiles of those Indian migrants who chose not to renounce (the Indian French subjects, or 'non-renouncers'), or those placed outside of the French legal system (British Indians). An analysis of these other categories of expatriate Indian, which I present in the final section of this chapter, lends a deeper understanding of the position of renouncers both within Indian expatriate society – the terms upon which they did, or did not, come together with their compatriots – and within Cochinchinese society, and lays the groundwork for the discussion to follow.

'Renunciation', its origins and official endorsement

Indians from the French Establishments who held French citizenship acquired this status through a decree enacted in 1881 (September 21) which invited a voluntary

'renunciation of personal law' (*renunciation du statut personnel*). Renunciation was a formal declaration, made in the presence of a magistrate. The declarant voiced his desire to no longer be subject to indigenous regulations pertaining to his personal status and to consent instead to be judged by the French civil code. The declaration was applicable to the declarant, his spouse, and any children who had yet to reach the age of majority. Those who had undergone renunciation were referred to as 'renouncers' (*renonçants*). The great majority of renouncers were male, but renunciation of women, particularly of widows, was not unheard of. As a sign of his changed status, the renouncer was obliged to adopt a surname, to be carried by himself, his spouse and his descendants. This was a departure from general Tamil practice where the use of a single name was the norm. The adoption of surnames by renouncers publicly marked the legal transformation they had undertaken of their identities. This and the identifiable patterns which renouncers followed in coining new names for themselves makes it possible today to identify Indians of French origin as the descendants of those who chose in the past to undergo the process of renunciation.⁸³

Relinquishing one's personal law was an act whose meaning was complex, and I will return to examine more closely what it implied, on paper and in practice. It is sufficient for the moment to briefly explain what 'indigenous personal law' entailed. From the late eighteenth century, a French policy in India of non-interference in local custom, (which did not extend to criminal law), established that the 'laws, usages and customs of [each] caste' should continue to regulate marriage, inheritance and family matters.⁸⁴ The sources of this legislation were Islamic and Hindu law, as interpreted by an advisory board of representatives of Pondicherry's several creeds and various castes. Christians, who to the dismay of the Catholic church did not put aside many of their 'usages and customs' upon conversion, continued to be governed by Hindu law.⁸⁵ While non-interference in indigenous matters was the French intention, it was nonetheless

⁸³ The text of the renunciation decree can be found in Appendix One. On renouncer names see Michalon, *Des Indes françaises*, p. 43.

⁸⁴ Arthur Girault, *Principes de colonisation et de législation coloniale*, Paris: Recueil-Sirey, 1927, p. 410.

⁸⁵ Weber, *Pondichéry*, pp. 45-46; M.B. Hooker, *Legal Pluralism. An Introduction to Colonial and Neo-Colonial Laws*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 218.

through French civil courts that legal decisions based on indigenous personal law were enacted.⁸⁶

Despite the complex form it took, however, renunciation was a legal act whose effect, primarily, was to confer citizenship upon its bearer. It was through the course of protests led by renouncers residing in Cochinchina, described in later chapters, that this came to be recognised. As a result of the Cochinchinese debates, Indians who had obtained citizenship through renunciation were recognised, in legal terms at least, as full French citizens wherever they found themselves in France's overseas empire. Their citizenship fell short only in the Metropole, where they were barred from employment in the public service.⁸⁷

The right to 'renounce' in French India is part of the wider story of how assimilation, in the sense of striving to shape overseas territories into 'a simple [legal and social] prolongation of the mother country' was promoted as French colonial policy in the late nineteenth century.⁸⁸ Efforts to explain the passing of the renunciation decree in the 1880s however - what drew certain groups of Indians to the idea, and why French authorities were willing to endorse it as a formal and voluntary act - are firmly rooted in local causes.

By the middle of the nineteenth century (1852), legislation was already in place in French India which recognised that certain acts, such as marriages in accordance with the French civil code, could constitute a 'tacit' renunciation of their indigenous personal laws (and thus the acquisition of French citizenship) by the parties involved.⁸⁹ The notion of renunciation was actively seized upon by certain sectors of Indian society, however, as a result of debates between two opposing factions both from the powerful *vellalla* landowning caste.⁹⁰ This caste comprised, in status terms, an 'aristocracy' in Pondicherry in the late nineteenth century because of the virtual absence of other castes considered to

⁸⁶ See Hooker, *Legal Pluralism*, pp. 216-218; Girault, *Principes*, pp. 409-410.

⁸⁷ Michalon, 'Des indes françaises', p. 39.

⁸⁸ Girault quoted in Deming Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen', p. 132.

⁸⁹ See Girault, *Principes*, p. 419.

⁹⁰ *Vellalla* in English language sources, *vellaja* in French.

rank higher in the ritual hierarchy.⁹¹ At root, these disputes were differences over how to respond to French colonial rule. Some *vellallas* were Catholic converts who had long benefited from the French presence, in roles as middlemen in French trade and in administrative posts. Catholic *vellallas* were content to continue to work, and rise, within the French colonial system and were receptive to French cultural influences. Pondicherry's Hindus *vellallas*, by contrast, were outright opposed to any French interference in the Indian social order, and saw in Catholic *vellallas*' susceptibility to French ideas a threat to the caste structure from which they drew much of their own power.⁹²

The key players in this late nineteenth century Pondicherry drama were two *vellallas* in opposite camps. Chanemougan was a Hindu who in the 1870s was elected to Pondicherry's municipal council. As evidenced by his position, he readily accepted and made use of the French introduction of universal suffrage, despite his opposition to 'progressive' social policies. In 1880 he was elected Mayor of Pondicherry, a position he held until 1908. During his extended term he made every attempt to block French interference in caste matters, and the free exercise of other customs and practices. He regarded renunciation as a 'sacrilege' committed against the caste system, and the renouncers as 'worse than the pariahs'.⁹³ In pro-Catholic readings of Chanemougan's 'reign', he held his position for four long decades not because of widespread opposition in Pondicherry to French attempts to interfere in the social order, but because of his flair for electoral fraud and manipulation.⁹⁴

Chanemougan's opposite number was Catholic lawyer Pounnoutamby LaPorte, the leader of the 'movement' (as Weber describes it) of renunciation. Pounnoutamby, who went by this single name prior to his renunciation, was a Pondicherry councillor alongside Chanemougan in the 1870s. He launched his campaign in 1873, after he was expelled from court for wearing European-style shoes rather than the slippers deemed

⁹¹ A. Esquer, *Essai sur les Castes dans l'Inde*, Pondicherry: A. Saligny, 1870, p. 103.

⁹² This account follows Weber, *Accumulation et assimilation*.

⁹³ E. Divien, quoted in Michalon, *Des Indes françaises*, p. 47.

⁹⁴ On Chanemougan's term in power, see Weber, *Pondichéry*, pp. 237-269.

worthy of his caste. In keeping with the legal procedure in rulings related to indigenous personal law, a French court had sanctioned him on behalf of his caste. His infraction of his personal law was in wearing shoes which degraded his caste position. It was only among *pariahs*, the 'untouchables' who were deemed impure and existed on the lowest end of the status hierarchy, that European footwear had been adopted.⁹⁵

Following the court's sanction of him, Pounnoutamby took his case to France. There he successfully argued that while Indians in the French Establishments had the right to be judged by their own 'usages and customs' this did not withhold from them the right to be judged, should they so choose, by French civil law. Pounnoutamby's public declaration of his desire to renounce his indigenous personal status led to similar informal renunciations, most of them by individuals who were, like Pounnoutamby, *vellalla* and Catholic. The growing movement among the 'small liberal Francophile minority' emboldened Pounnoutamby to call for the abolishment of caste privileges in the French colony.⁹⁶ He and other like-minded *vellallas* began to cross caste lines in church, taking their place among *pariahs* (Catholics of caste had previously insisted upon segregation, of congregations and in cemeteries). They hosted banquets, too, at which they broke taboos about inter-caste dining by sharing meals with their 'untouchable' compatriots.⁹⁷

In this reading of the rise of renunciation in French India, which emphasises renunciation as a local movement driven by a sincere wish for colonial assimilation and indigenous social reform, the formal faculty of renunciation was passed in law because of strong support for the idea among local officials frustrated by their own inability to handle caste matters with a sure hand. Pounnoutamby's renunciation has taken on something of the status of legend in Pondicherry history and among the descendants of renouncers. He was the first to renounce, they maintain, and he took on the surname of LaPorte because renunciation had 'opened the door for Indians to the West'.⁹⁸ A street in Pondicherry still bears his name.

⁹⁵ This account, in this and the paragraph which follows, draws from Weber, *Pondichéry*, pp. 227—236, and Michalon, p. 47.

⁹⁶ Weber, *Pondichéry*, p. 229.

⁹⁷ Weber, *Pondichéry*, pp. 227—236, and Michalon, p. 47.

⁹⁸ See Weber, *Pondichéry*, p. 235.

While this account is appealing because of its emphasis on the agency of local people, LaPorte's campaign was not the sole force which brought the renunciation law into being. The 'traditionalist' Chanemougan, courtesy of France's bestowal of a democratic system and despite the intolerance he displayed of French liberal values, had just been elected Mayor of Pondicherry in 1880. Granting Pondicherry's small group of progressive Francophile Indians a status which might allow their votes to carry the same (grossly disproportionate) weight in the electorate system as that of Europeans was one way in which French authorities could regain control of their beleaguered democracy.⁹⁹ The British Consular agent at Karikal pointed to this political motive for French support for renunciation in a letter in which he claimed that 'the decree originated in the ambition of a perfervid, noisy and not very scrupulous group of 'politicians' ...who were anxious to work the administration of these settlements according to their own – more or less, sincere ideas'.¹⁰⁰ In this account, renunciation was approved as an attempt by French authorities in India to regain control of a colonial 'democratic' political system which was escaping them. This is one way of understanding how French citizenship could be made so freely available in the French Establishments in India when it was so much more carefully controlled, as we shall see, in Cochinchina.

If political ambitions played a role in prompting French authorities to endorse the process of renunciation, so too did French hopes of creating a corps of indigenous public servants in whom they felt they could instil their trust. Renunciation of personal status was promoted by French administrators in India in the late 1870s as a way for Indians to take up posts requiring moral responsibility and trust within the French colonial administration. Correspondence between French officials in India in the late 1870s demonstrates their concern that Indians in public posts might have beliefs and customs out of keeping with the French civil (and moral) code they were appointed to protect and uphold. As the Pondicherry lawyer Clairon described it in the 1920s, renunciation from

⁹⁹ On the system of electoral colleges in late nineteenth century French India see Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁰ IOL L/PJ/6/84 Naturalisation of Indian Coolies, etc, (1833)[sic]: British Consular Agent Karikal to Chief Secretary to Government, 4 July, 1882.

the 'rules of Brahmanism' was intended to lessen 'the obstacle they place in the way of the application of French public law in the administration of...French territory'.¹⁰¹

The problem of the civil standing and moral position of indigenous public servants arose in 1879 with the promotion of the first Indian, Cannoussamy of Pondicherry, to a position of Justice of the Peace. The question raised by high officials in Paris was whether a 'native' holding moral values incompatible with those dear to the Republic (polygamy was the example cited) was able to make judgements backed by the French civil code. These officials appeared comforted by the fact that Cannoussamy, as a Catholic, had already made some progress towards embracing French values. The outcome of these discussions was that as long as Indians renounced their personal status and agree to be ruled by the French civil code then they were eligible to apply for such high-level posts.¹⁰²

Who the renouncers were and what they sought

The great majority of renouncers were Catholic, and few Catholics did not undergo renunciation. As one author observed, 'the native Christian [in French India] almost always renounces his personal status'.¹⁰³ Hindu renouncers were far fewer, and fewer still were Muslim.¹⁰⁴ In caste terms renouncers were either from high-status groups or, at the opposite extreme, from the ranks of the ritually impure (*pariahs*).¹⁰⁵ The vast majority of renunciations took place among people from Pondicherry and Karikal, with very few renunciations registered from among people from France's other colonial possessions in India.¹⁰⁶

These general observations are supported by the 'statements of acts of renunciation' which were published periodically in the *Moniteur Officiel* (subsequently the *Journal Officiel*) of French India. Although the lists themselves began to be

¹⁰¹ Clairon, *La renonciation*, p. 81.

¹⁰² NAIP, DM 1879: correspondence MMC and GEFI, June – November 1879.

¹⁰³ Philippe Herchenroder, *Etude sur le statut juridique des indigènes chrétiens*, Paris: Domat Montchrestien, 1935, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Annasse, *Les comptoirs*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁵ Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', p. 45.

¹⁰⁶ Weber, 'Accumulation et assimilation', p. 209.

published from 1882, shortly after the renunciation law was enacted, from the late 1890s these lists included detailed information about each renouncer, including religion, profession and caste name, the latter nevertheless quite out of keeping with what the vanguard of renouncers professed the act to represent. Because of a ban introduced in 1937 on the use of caste names in civil and notary acts, this information disappears from these lists after this date.¹⁰⁷ I have not undertaken a comprehensive analysis of these lists but I have studied lists from selected years in order to provide some overview of patterns and trends in renunciation in French India.

Of the ninety-one acts of renunciation published in the *Moniteur Officiel* in 1898 forty-five acts had been undertaken by Catholics (49 percent), thirty-eight by Hindus (42 percent), and two (2 percent) by Muslims (the more specific category 'Catholic' rather than 'Christian' was used). For four acts of renunciation no religion was given and the remaining renouncer identified himself as a 'free thinker'. The breakdown along religious lines was similar in 1916 (64 percent Catholic, 35 percent Hindu, 2 percent Muslim of a total of 55 acts of renunciation published) and 1928 (51 percent Catholic, 45 percent Hindu, 3 percent Muslim of a total of 87 acts published). In order to appreciate the frequency with which Catholics renounced, (and conversely the infrequency with which Hindus did so) it is helpful to examine the proportion of people of each religious faith within the total populations of Pondicherry and Karikal. In 1880, eighty-six percent of Pondicherry's population was Hindu and thirteen percent Catholic. Two percent were Muslims. Karikal's Muslim population was larger in comparison, at sixteen percent, while Hindus represented 69 percent of the population and Catholics fifteen percent. These proportions had changed somewhat by the interwar years, but not greatly. Pondicherry's population breakdown in 1926 was 90 percent Hindu, twelve percent Catholic and three percent Muslim. Figures for Karikal in the same year were 76 percent Hindu, fourteen percent Catholic and ten percent Muslim.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ 'Etat civil des natifs dans les établissements français dans l'Inde et suppression dans les actes publics de la mention de la caste des intéressés', *Journal Officiel des Etablissements français dans l'Inde (JOEFI)*, June 1937, p. 916-919.

¹⁰⁸ See Delval, *Musulmans français*, p. 141-142.

It is a pity, for modern research purposes, that the first renunciations to be published in the *Moniteur Officiel* in 1882 did not mention the caste or religion of any of these earliest renouncers.¹⁰⁹ We can assume that many of the *vellallas* who spearheaded the movement would have renounced at this time, but there is no evidence to indicate whether *pariahs* participated in the movement from its inception as keenly as *vellallas*. Nevertheless, the main groups to renounce thereafter remained either the elite *vellallas* or the socially disenfranchised *pariahs*. The majority of *vellallas* who renounced were Catholic, as were many *pariahs*. The number of Hindu renunciations, as I have shown, was relatively high, despite general claims that few Hindus renounced. Most of these Hindu renouncers were of *pariah* origins. These meaningful correlations make it difficult to separate religion from caste, and I have refrained from doing so here.

The largest group of people who renounced in 1898, by caste and religion, were all from Karikal and were all Hindu *pariahs* (28 of a total 91 renunciations registered, or 31 percent). Catholic 'valangamougattars', or 'people of the right hand division', a name assumed by some *pariahs* of Pondicherry, accounted for another seven renunciations in that year, for a total of thirty-five (38 percent) by people at the furthest end of the status ladder.¹¹⁰ Catholics from the *vellalla* caste accounted for twenty-nine percent of renunciations in the same year (26 out of 91). By 1916, the number of *vellalla* renunciations was much lower, with only one Hindu and four catholic *vellallas* renouncing in that year. Renunciation remained popular, however, among *valangamougattars*, both Catholic (31 out of 55) and Hindu (17 out of 55), in total representing eighty-seven percent of renunciations published that year. The proportion of both *pariah* and *vellalla* renunciations had diminished somewhat in 1923, as they were joined by renunciations from a greater variety of other caste groups, but both continued to be the largest two groups of renouncers. In that year *valangamougattar* renunciations represented 24 out of the total 87 renunciations, or twenty-six percent, with slightly more

¹⁰⁹ 'Relevé hebdomadaire des actes de renonciation au statut personnel', *Moniteur Officiel des Etablissements français dans l'Inde (MOEFI)*, various months, 1898.

¹¹⁰ On the origin of 'valangamougattar', see E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of South India*, Madras: Government Press, 1909, p. 80. The distinction between 'right hand' (*valangai*) and 'left hand' (*idangai*) castes was an important one in South India in the nineteenth century. According to the French ethnographer Esquer, *vellallas* were allied with *valangamougattars* as the respective leaders and servants of the right-hand division. Esquer, *Essai sur les Castes*, p. 95.

Catholics than Hindus, and *vellallas* accounted for sixteen out of 87 or eighteen percent of renunciations, evenly divided between Catholics and Hindus.¹¹¹

The infrequent mention of Muslim renunciations in the official publications either did not include the mention of caste, or these renouncers were described as 'of Muslim caste' (*de caste musulman*). Islam, in the absence of other caste labels, was treated as a caste in itself. It was, (and remains), a matter of debate as to whether the social divisions which distinguished different groups of Muslims in South India (of which more in the next section of this chapter) should be properly considered castes in the sense of a hierarchy of status or ritual purity.¹¹²

In the three years selected, a single renunciation was published for Chandernagore (1898) and one for Mahe (1923), an indication of just how little interest renunciation generated in the French possessions other than Pondicherry and Karikal.¹¹³ Within the two largest French *comptoirs*, however, renouncers were drawn from specific localities. Catholic *vellallas* from the village of Reddiar Palayam, (within the bounds of French Pondicherry) are listed repeatedly, as are *vannias* from Nellitope, another French village belonging to Pondicherry. Both villages were associated not only with renunciation, but with Indochina. Reddiar Palayam is to this day dubbed 'Little Saigon', and many of the tombs in the catholic cemeteries in both villages carry epitaphs describing careers pursued in Indochina. Some Indochina connections are also evident in the lists published in the *Moniteur* and the *Journal Officiel*, indicating in some cases that the person or family in question was domiciled in Indochina at the time of the renunciation, and renounced by proxy. The father and son Bavazy and Pakiry, Muslims from Karikal, were both described in 1898 as milk vendors 'resident in Phnom Penh, Cambodia'.¹¹⁴ Two catholic *vellallas* who renounced in August of 1912, Teivassayagayam and Mariassouce

¹¹¹ 'Relevé', *MOEFI*, 1898; 'Relevé mensuelle des acts de renonciation', *JOEFI*, various months for 1916 and 1923.

¹¹² For one example of early twentieth century usages see Julien Vinson, 'Les musulmans du sud de l'Inde', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol 2, 1907, 199-204. For the modern debate see Mattison Mines, 'Social Stratification among Muslim Tamils in Tamilnadu, South India', in Intiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1978, 159-169; Frank S. Fanselow, 'The Disinvention of Caste among Tamil Muslims', in C.J. Fuller (ed.), *Caste Today*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, 202-226.

¹¹³ 'Relevé', *MOEFI*, 1898; 'Relevé', *JOEFI*, 1916, 1923.

¹¹⁴ *MOEFI*, 1898.

(the common surname they chose, Sinnou suggests they were probably related) were 'residing in Tonkin' at the time of their renunciation. Similarly, and in the same year, Andonissamy, a catholic *vellalla* from Reddiar Palayam who chose the surname Derock, was described as 'currently in Saigon'.¹¹⁵

The reasons why some people native to French India chose to 'renounce' their personal status and take on French citizenship are complex, as are the reasons why others rejected the offer. They encompass the question of what renouncers understood they were doing by declaring their rejection of the 'laws, usages and customs of their caste', the ideas and principles they may have sought to adhere to, and what they thought they might gain (or lose) in material or status terms by undergoing this legal transformation of their identities.

When Pounnoutamby Laporte wore European shoes into court in 1873, his action, playing on a double meaning, was a declaration of equality in two senses. The footwear he sported was worn routinely by his colonial masters, but was also, in Indian terms, considered to have been sullied in its adoption by the lowest, 'untouchable' ranks of Indian society. Laporte stood equal, his action said, to Europeans, but also to all other Indians regardless of their caste status. Like Laporte, the vanguard of catholic *vellalla* renouncers appear to have understood by their renunciation that they were declaring this double commitment, to seek equality with the French and to avowedly reject the caste system.

I have seen little documentation which might offer insights into how quickly *pariahs* began to follow the 'movement' or what they understood renunciation to mean. The primary appeal of renunciation for this group would no doubt have been its promise of escape from the stigma of their caste status. Certainly conversion to Catholicism, the strategy previously employed by *pariahs* to evade society's stigmatising value system, had not entirely succeeded. Despite the church's disapproval, Indian devotees (of caste) continued to adhere to a caste hierarchy. Walls were erected within churches, as well as

¹¹⁵ JOEFI, 1912.

cemeteries, to separate the caste from the 'impure', and there were not taken down until after the First World War.¹¹⁶ Yet among French India's outcasted *pariahs* were men and women who found opportunities to work for the French as domestic servants and who, in doing so, acquired a rudimentary knowledge of French.¹¹⁷ I speculate here for lack of firm evidence, but the principle of equality in a French republican sense may have held added additional appeal for this group. It is likely too, that it was *pariahs* previously employed in French domestic service, or with this type of background, who found their way to Indochina.

If, for its most principled adherents, renunciation was a commitment to equality both with French colonisers and fellow Indians, among renouncers overseas in Indochina, the former principle was always more pronounced. Without denying these expatriate renouncers the conviction of their beliefs, there were also pragmatic reasons for the emphasis on renunciation as citizenship. The crux of the many debates over their rights and privileges in Cochinchina centred, as I will later demonstrate, on whether they could be considered to be French citizens. In the course of these debates renouncers on occasion did maintain that they had rejected the notion of caste through their renunciation but this was usually intended to demonstrate all the stronger their commitment to French republican notions of equality and fraternity. The cry of a 1907 pamphlet published by Saigon-based renouncers in support of Indian policemen whose contractual rights were under threat was, 'No castes, only men. No *pariahs*, only equal citizens'.¹¹⁸

One could argue that for renouncers from the social elite, in the French Establishments as well as Indochina, their effort to secure legal assimilation with the metropolitan French was a means of furthering opportunities for themselves within the French colonial system and preceded the goal of fundamental social change within Indian

¹¹⁶ Saroja Sundararajan, *Glimpses of the History of Karaikkal*, Madras, Lalitha Publications, 1984, p.130; N. Gupta, 'Citizens of French India', p. 169; Miles, *Imperial Burdens*, p. 266; Francis Cyril Anthony, ed., *Gazeteer of India : Union Territory of Pondicherry Vol I*, Pondicherry: Administration of the Union Territory of Pondicherry Press, 1982, p. 356.

¹¹⁷ Weber, *Pondicherry*, p. 39.

¹¹⁸ ANOM GGI 17248 Au sujet des agents de police indiens citoyens français de la ville de Saigon, 1910: Pamphlet entitled 'Ce qui se passé au Colonies, les Immortels principes!: La question des Indiens Citoyens Français en Cochinchine'.

society. That renunciation did not effectively lift the social stigma of untouchability for *pariahs* who chose to renounce is evidenced by the formation in Pondicherry of the 'Progressive Society for Renounced Valangamougattars' (1898). A similar society for *pariah* 'uplift', the 'Réveil Social' was established in 1907.¹¹⁹ Further research into the working of these societies would be necessary in order to establish whether they received active support from renouncers from caste backgrounds. From what we know of renouncers' interactions with one another in Cochinchina in the early decades of their presence in that colony, there is no firm evidence that they made sharp distinctions between themselves on the basis of caste. Rather the opposite: documentation left by the social organisations in which they played a prominent role suggests that the banquets held regularly by these organisations did not create any problems of intercaste dining. If there were puritans present who (retaining dietary restrictions along Hindu lines) were troubled by menus consisting of 'filet à la Luculus' (presumably beef), and free-flowing wine and champagne, they have left no record of their grievances.¹²⁰

Although renunciation was understood by the people who undertook it as a declaration of equality, on paper it constituted an abandoning of indigenous personal laws in favour of the French civil code. Renouncers were generally more concerned, however, with clearly defining the rights they had gained, than with dwelling on the indigenous 'usages' they had renounced. Strictly speaking, renunciation should have meant, in exchange for French citizenship, giving up all practices relating to marriage, inheritance and the structure of the family which did not conform to the French Civil Code. The explanation given for the modest number of (caste) Hindu renunciations is that Hindus considered it an affront to the caste system and its values.¹²¹ Similarly, very few Muslims renounced because they did not wish to forgo marriage and inheritance practices proscribed by Islam and moreover, renouncing such practices risked constituting an outright denial of their faith.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Anthony, *Gazeteer*, pp. 356-357.

¹²⁰ 'Banquet donné par M. Ra-Soccalingam en l'honneur de M. François Deloncle', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 16 April 1910.

¹²¹ Annasse, *Les comptoirs*, p. 123.

¹²² Interview JBP More, Paris 5 April 2004.

In practice, however, renunciation did little to change the practices of the majority of renouncers in marriage, inheritance or other aspects of family life. Underage, arranged and consanguine marriages continued to be practices among renouncers, and these were quietly tolerated by French authorities despite being inadmissible under the French Civil Code.¹²³ These were practices which Catholics, most notably, continued to engage in (despite the church's attempts to sanction them). This suggests this group took advantage, in their position as catholic converts, of the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of their acts of renunciation. Catholics had ostensibly, through their religious conversion, already adopted certain 'usages' more closely aligned with the French Civil Code. One Saigon-based Catholic, pushing the notion of renunciation to its logical conclusion, wrote an absurdist text in 1890 begging authorities to have his renunciation rescinded and allow him to be naturalised, on the basis that he had already given up his indigenous customs and usages in the act of converting to Christianity. He had, he claimed reverted to his former personal status of 'paganism' through his renunciation.¹²⁴

The extent of renunciation, at home and overseas

Renunciation never became a widespread movement in French India. While figures vary as to how many Indians had renounced by the turn of the twentieth century, all of them are relatively modest. One source claims there were 3700 by 1883, another that in 1900 there were 3000 renouncers.¹²⁵ Weber maintains that renunciation in French India 'had very little impact' and that renunciations never became popular except among a very small sector of the population.¹²⁶ The figures he provides are different again, but similarly low:

There were about 2000 renouncers in total at the beginning of the twentieth century. They represented 2% of the population of Pondicherry and 0.2% of that of Karikal in 1883 (the date at which the movement was almost at its height).

¹²³ Weber, 'Accumulation'; Annoussamy David, 'Le Mariage entre oncle et niece dans le sud de l'Inde', *Trait d'Union*, April 2002., p. 8.

¹²⁴ T.P. Appavou, *Absurde renonciation de Indous chrétiens*, Saigon: Imprimerie Aug. Boch, 1890, p. 4.

¹²⁵ Morrachini and Divien, both cited in Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', p. 45.

¹²⁶ Weber, 'Accumulation et assimilation', p. 190.

There were a dozen or so in Mahe and Yanaon and they were totally absent in Chandernagore.¹²⁷

Michalon, using registers still kept at Pondicherry's Municipal Building (*Hotel de Ville*) in which renunciations were recorded from 1882, has charted trends in the incidence of renunciation over time. His data supports Weber's view, that renunciations peaked in the initial year or so after the decree was put in place, and then dropped off sharply. Some 1000 acts of renunciation were registered in the first year, and 295 in 1883, while in subsequent years anywhere from 20 to 100 acts were registered, right through until 1963, the last year in which renunciations were carried out.¹²⁸

While evidence from French India shows that very few people renounced their personal status there, and that the number of renunciations peaked in the year in which the decree was introduced, trends within the population of Indians of French origin in Cochinchina are somewhat different. The overall number of renouncers in Cochinchina was modest throughout the colonial period, as was the total number of migrants of Indian origin with other types of legal standing. Total migrants of Indian origin, including renouncers, Indian French subjects, and British Indians probably never stood at more than 0.2% of Cochinchina's population at its peak in the 1920s, or 7000 migrants against a total population of nearly four million. The figure was significantly lower in other parts of Indochina.¹²⁹

The proportion of renounced Indians to Indian French subjects residing in Cochinchina, however, was higher than the proportion of the same populations in French India. As we have seen, Weber maintains that a mere 2% of Pondicherry's population had renounced by 1883. In 1888, sixteen percent of the Indians from the French territories who resided in Cochinchina were renouncers. Although migrants of Indian origin from the British and French empires were more or less equally represented

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 209.

¹²⁸ Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', p. 45; Interview Annoussamy David, Pondicherry, August 2004.

¹²⁹ My estimate is derived from several sources: *ASI, Recueil des statistiques relatives aux années 1913-1922*, pp. 33, 36-37; 'Le Cahier des vœux annamites. Naturalisation française', *Echo Annamite*, 1 December, 1925 (Indian voters 1921); VNAI L11 Non-reconnaissance du droit de l'éligibilité des indiens sujets français aux chambres de commerce, 1938; État numérique des Indiens sujets français non renonçants établis en Cochinchine, 1936 (sex ratios for comparison).

throughout the period, by 1935 the percentage of Indians who originated from the French possessions and who held the status of renouncer (79%) in Cochinchina far surpassed the number who did not, the reverse of the situation in French India in the same period.

Table 1 Population in Cochinchina of residents of Indian origin, 1888-1939

Population in Cochinchina of residents of Indian origin, 1888 - 1939			
year	legal status		
	french citizens (renouncers)	french subjects (non renouncers)	british subjects
1888	64 (male voters)	342 (male voters)	812
1921	700 (male voters)	1274 (in 1915)	4 000
1936	1589	435	2 000
1939	2000	800	3000

Sources in footnote¹³⁰

Links to Indochina

French reasons for endorsing renunciation are not completely transparent and Indian reasons for choosing to renounce are equally complex. What cannot be disputed, however, are the many forces which connect renunciation with the movement of Indians to Cochinchina and other cities of Indochina. The first Indians from the French Establishments called to Saigon to work in the administration from the 1860s were undoubtedly cohorts of Pounnoutamby Laporte. They were from the same group of 'progressive' Catholics of the *vellalla* caste who went on to become the main supporters of the renunciation movement a decade later. LaPorte's relatives and children were among those who fashioned careers for themselves in Indochina.¹³¹ The debates over

¹³⁰ VNA2 Goucoch IB 29/233 Elections coloniales, inscription des natifs de l'Inde sur les listes électorales 1887-1888; *Annuaire de la Cochinchina Française pour l'année 1888*, Saigon : Imprimerie Coloniale, 1888, p. 508; 'Le Cahier des vœux annamites. Naturalisation française', *Echo Annamite*, 1 December 1925; *ASI, Recueil des statistiques relatives aux années 1913-1922*, pp. 36-37; VNA1 L11 : 'État numérique des Indiens sujets français non renonçants établis en Cochinchine, 1936'; *Annuaire statistique de l'Indochine, Vol. 6, 1934-35-36*, Hanoi : IDEO, 1937, p. 25; *Le Monde Colonial Illustré* No 164 – Sept 1937; P. Huard 'Chinois, Japonais et Hindous en Indochine', *Bulletin Économique Indochinois*, 3, 1939, 484-490 (pp. 484-485).

¹³¹ Weber, *Pondichéry*, p. 253; Annasse, *Les comptoirs*, p. 41.

renouncers' electoral and civil rights in Cochinchina, which I describe in Chapters Four and Five, took place during the same period when supporters of LaPorte and Chanemougan were pitted against one another in French India. Chanemougan's success in removing renouncers from 'European' electoral lists in French India in the 1880s, it has been claimed, even provided a direct motive for renouncers to seek refuge in Cochinchina.¹³² I have not found, in the primary sources I consulted, any firm statement proving that renouncers' intentionally removed themselves from Pondicherry to escape Chanemougan and his 'traditionalists'. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the height of debate in Cochinchina over how the status of renouncers was to be interpreted, from the early 1880s to 1907, coincides neatly with Chanemougan's extended term as Mayor of Pondicherry (1880-1908). Whether intentional or incidental, the positioning of Cochinchina's renouncers away from Chanemougan's adverse influence allowed their claims to reach a more receptive audience.

I have found no solid reference either, which links the French wish for its Indian public servants to display appropriate moral values with their hiring in the French public service in Indochina. Even as French authorities were discussing the value of renunciation as a means of ensuring the moral stature of Indians in the public service (as flimsy an effort at social engineering as this may have been), Cochinchina's administration was expanding and relying on Pondicherry and Karikal as the source of many of the functionaries it required. In this light, one has to ask whether a legal instrument intended to stamp French values on Indian public servants was not introduced with a view to its application beyond French India. Vennemani Cannoussamy, the Pondicherry magistrate whose promotion in 1879 first raised the question of moral guarantees, was transferred only five years later to Cochinchina, where he became the first Indian Justice of the Peace in that colony. He served at the tribunal in Mỹ Tho from 1884, and subsequently in Rách Giã.¹³³

¹³² Marius, 'Les Pondichériens dans l'administration', p. 391.

¹³³ NAIP DM 1883: MMC to GEFI, 12 May 1883; NAIP DM 1884: Decree of the President of the French Republic, 11 February 1884; *Annuaire de la Cochinchine Française pour l'année 1887*, Saigon: Imprimerie Impériale, p. 208.

As we have seen, those who chose to renounce were drawn primarily from the two extreme ends of society in French India. They were either people of high caste, but a small Francophile and 'progressive' minority among the high status sector of society, or they came, as *pariahs* deeply stigmatised by the rest of society, from the bottom of the status ladder. Although there was little in the way of French language education available to people native to French India, these two groups, despite the social gap which separated them, were the most likely to receive it, and this education was in turn another factor tying them to Indochina.

French medium schools in the French Establishments were scarce not only because of French slowness to found them. This situation was also due to the fact that the majority of the Indian population failed to see any value in learning French. Those who did obtain an education in French were either from among the Francophile elite, or were *pariahs* who were enrolled in French-medium schools established expressly thorough efforts to improve their lot. In the latter case persistent social prejudice – which either segregated them or eventually excluded them outright – meant they were rarely able to obtain more than a basic primary education.¹³⁴ Financial means also played a role in how far Indians could advance in French-medium education. As French citizens, the children of renouncers were permitted to benefit from the programme of public education, introduced in the French possessions in 1893, which was otherwise reserved for Europeans and Indo-French.¹³⁵ Even after this date, however, it was high caste individuals who tended to stay longer in education, usually obtaining the *baccalauréat* and, if their families could afford it, going on to higher education either in Pondicherry or in France. In general, renouncers of low status origins continued to obtain little more than a primary school certificate at best, although there were marked exceptions to this rule. The lawyer Mathias Clarion was of humble status background but he nonetheless managed to obtain and make use of a higher education. He and other members of the Clairon family (who also advanced to respectable positions in the professions and in

¹³⁴ On caste segregation in Pondicherry schools, see M. Valmaire, *Rapport sur l'enseignement dans l'Inde Française du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*, Pondicherry: Imprimerie moderne de Pondichéry, 1922, pp. 13, 27; Weber, *Pondichéry*, p. 302; NAIP, DM 1908: petition 'Réveil Social' to MMC, 7 February 1908.

¹³⁵ Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', p. 39.

business) were instrumental in the formation of the *Réveil Social*, formed in Pondicherry (1907) to 'work for the welfare of the depressed classes'.¹³⁶ It is probably no coincidence that the Clairon family progressed in Saigon, where opportunities to rise, both economically and socially and regardless of their origins, were greater.

Regardless of the level of French education they obtained, opportunities for French-educated Indians were limited if they stayed at home. As the educationalist Valmaire observed in the 1920s, the small pool of Indians who had been educated in French were virtually obliged to leave India to find work:

Those in our colony who really have need of French are but a small number. It is those who are preoccupied with local politics, those who seek places in the administration or who aim for certain liberal professions such as the bar, teaching, etc, for which but a few places are available. The others, it must be admitted, have no use for French. There are nonetheless people who learn [French] but most of them do not remain in the Colony; neither industry, nor local commerce are sufficient to offer them prospects, so they emigrate to larger colonies and especially towards Indochina. It is this route which, in the last twenty-five to thirty years, nearly the entire *créole* element has taken and it is the route taken by more and more Indians who have through education become proficient in French.¹³⁷

It was their French education, then, rather than renunciation, which initially made some Indians from the French Establishments employable in Indochina as France extended its influence there. As I explain in Chapter Five, however, renunciation became obligatory, from the late 1880s, for Indians employed in the Cochinchinese administration who wished to continue to enjoy 'European' terms of service, with the paid leave, travel and 'colonial' supplements which this included. Thereafter, renunciation had a value in Cochinchina which it did not have in India. Indian employees in the public service in Pondicherry or Karikal may have had a salary on par with their European counterparts, but they were not eligible for the array of extra benefits enjoyed by Europeans hired from overseas. The prospects, in Indochina, of so fully enjoying the benefits of French citizenship made employment there even more appealing. It was a factor tying renunciation and migration to Indochina even more intimately together.

¹³⁶ Antony, *Gazeteer* p. 356.

¹³⁷ Valmaire, *Rapport sur l'enseignement*, pp.17-18.

One of the main obligations which French citizenship carried was the duty to fulfil military service.¹³⁸ In principle, renouncers too were obliged to serve in the French military. Until 1908, however, renouncers, like all other French citizens of the French Establishments in India, enjoyed an exemption. The fact that renouncers did not have to 'pay their debt' to France was one justification, prior to that date, for questioning the quality of their 'citizenship', yet after the policy changed, another difficulty remained. The (Second) Treaty of Paris, signed in 1815, forbade the construction of military fortifications in French India and severely restricted the number of troops that France could retain on its soil in India (no more than one and a half companies of sepoys in total, with a limit of one hundred men in Pondicherry and thirty in Karikal).¹³⁹ From 1908 French authorities circumvented this restriction by recruiting men from French India who were eligible for military service (renouncers, as well as Indo-French and Europeans) to the nearest recruitment centre in the French overseas empire. This was located in Saigon.¹⁴⁰

By the time renouncers began to be eligible for recruitment in the French army, many of the young men to be recruited and sent to Indochina already lived there. Recruitment tables of all young men of Indian origin eligible for the draft in 1920 show that a single recruit out of a total of 62 men had been born in Pondicherry. Saigon was the birthplace of an astonishing seventy-seven percent (48 recruits), seconded by Haiphong (five recruits). Other towns and cities named as the birthplaces of Indian recruits included Hanoi, Kratie (Cambodia), St. Denis (Réunion), Sénégal, Penang, Capetown and Columbo. These figures included some Indo-French (I could identify thirty-seven recruits as renouncers, based on their surnames, and fifteen as Indo-French), but the figure is still very high. The fact that by 1920 so many young renounced Indian men who were born in Indochina demonstrates again just how tightly renunciation was tied to migration.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', p. 39.

¹³⁹ Annasse, *Les comptoirs*, pp. 107-108; Miles, *Imperial Burdens*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ NAIP DM 1910: arrêtée interministérielle 19 April 1910.

¹⁴¹ NAIP C-372 Etat Civil Tableau de recensement des jeunes français, naturalisés et renonçants ayant atteint l'âge de 20 ans révolus, Tableau de recensement des classes de 1887 à 1905.

Men native to French India, but who did not hold French citizenship, could voluntarily pursue careers in the military as auxiliaries (sepoys).¹⁴² Few, however, remained auxiliaries for long. They were motivated to renounce their personal status by the considerably better pay, terms and pensions which they stood to enjoy as French citizens. Those volunteers who did not renounce came to regret it, like the auxiliary Kichena who, having renounced his personal status 'a little late', wrote to Paris in 1931 to appeal for a raise in his meagre indigenous pension.¹⁴³ However, while one might attribute these volunteer's renunciations to the pursuit of financial gain, a glance at some of the surnames these new French citizens chose for themselves suggest that patriotic love of France and its military genius cannot be entirely discounted as motivations for their decision. Surnames chosen by soldiers who renounced in 1912 included 'Freycinet' and 'Clemenceau'.¹⁴⁴ Among French troops in Indochina in the 1930s was 'Outtiriadassou Magnifique', while 'Napoleon', 'Tricolore', 'Egalité' and 'Liberté' were popular choices in the same year.¹⁴⁵ Choosing the name of an admired historical figure could betray the force of the British presence across French India's porous boundaries in embarrassing ways, however. Aroquianadin Robaitche Claive and Andonissamy Robaitche Claive (presumably the 'Robert Clives' were brothers) were both stationed in the Third Regiment in Indochina in the 1930s.¹⁴⁶

As this section has demonstrated, the appeal of renunciation for certain types of Indians in the French Establishments was very closely intertwined with the circumstances which drew people from French India to Indochina. The connections between renunciation and Indochina do not end there though. The decree on renunciation was also closely related to a similar decree applicable to Cochinchina on procedures for naturalisation in the latter colony.

¹⁴² Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', p. 43.

¹⁴³ NAIP DM 1931: S. Kichena, 'former voluntary soldier' to MMC, 11 February 1931.

¹⁴⁴ 'Relevé', *JOEFI*, 1912.

¹⁴⁵ NAIP, DM 1930.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Indian renunciation and *Annamite* naturalisation compared

Renunciation did not only help to draw Indians from the French Establishments to Indochina. Their efforts, once they were established in Cochinchina, to ensure that renunciation was equivalent to French citizenship only served to widen a jarring gap between their rights, as incoming migrants, and the rights of the colonised peoples indigenous to Cochinchina. As I have stated, the development of the faculty of renunciation is part of the story of how French colonialism was guided by the ideal of equal rights for all citizens of a Greater France. The movement of renouncers to Cochinchina illustrates just how uneven the realisation of this ideal could be across France's disparate colonial possessions. The generous granting of civil and political rights to the peoples of France's *anciens colonies* with the rise of the Third Republic (effectively a re-introduction of those rights), stands in marked contrast to the situation in territories first claimed by France from the latter half of the nineteenth century. In Cochinchina, the language of assimilation was employed by French authorities to describe their thinking on any future social order in the colony, but the means sanctioned to achieve it remained, compared to renunciation, meagre at best.

The freedom given to Indians of the French Establishments to choose for themselves whether they wished to become French citizens cannot be overemphasised. Individuals native to French India were merely invited, if they so desired, to declare themselves 'renounced' of their personal laws and to thereby become French citizens. By contrast, people native to Cochinchina were granted the right, from May 1881, to apply for naturalisation. They were obliged to demonstrate they had performed some service to France and had an attachment to French culture in order for their applications for citizenship to be considered. The privilege was not readily granted. Indeed, the process became more difficult over time. By the 1910s Cochinchinese seeking French naturalisation were required to demonstrate guarantees of 'Frenchness' in their private life. Applications for naturalisation came to include questions as to whether the applicant wore western dress, ate rice or bread, and sat at a table with chairs.¹⁴⁷ Natives of French

¹⁴⁷ Ho Tai, 'Politics of Compromise', p. 382.

India, meanwhile, could choose if they wished to renounce regardless of whether they had any knowledge of the French language. Even suggestions of attachment to British, rather than French glory, as my previous discussion of renouncer surnames indicates, did not bar recognition of their renunciations.

The differences in these modes by which colonial subjects could obtain citizenship is only heightened by the proximity of the two pieces of legislation. The law on French naturalisation in Cochinchina (May 1881) predates the French Indian law on renunciation (September 1881) by mere months. Moreover, commentators on French colonial legislation have pointed out that the effects of renunciation as they are described in the Indian law are a textual reproduction of the effects of naturalisation as described in the Cochinchinese law, a fact that was used to support the idea that renunciation was equal to naturalisation in its legal effect.¹⁴⁸

The core of this thesis centres on the consequences of this situation, where people who were willing to engage in, and able to advance the French imperial project of assimilation, moved into a second French colony where local peoples' ability to pursue aspirations of this nature were very much more limited. In the section which follows I examine the privileges enjoyed and obligations shouldered by renounced Indians in Cochinchina by virtue of their legal status.

Renouncers' legal rights in Cochinchina

Indians who had renounced their personal status were not firmly recognised in Cochinchina as full French citizens until the 1900s and even after that date, as I demonstrate in later chapters, there were ongoing attempts on the part of authorities in Cochinchina to undermine their status. In legal principle however, if not always in practice, renouncers in Cochinchina, and throughout Indochina, were treated on an equal footing with their counterparts from the French Metropole.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Girault, *Principes*, p. 420; Clairon, *La renonciation*, p. 52.

¹⁴⁹ Evidence of renounced Indians being classed as French citizens in Tonkin and Cambodia, respectively, can be found in: VNA1 T.12 4919 Listes des patentes indigènes européens et asiatiques étrangers de la ville de Hanoi en 1932 et 1935; NAC 24842 Demande formulée par M. Pakiam tendant à obtenir sa nomination à un titre de Mandarin honoraire.

There were many advantages to holding French citizenship in Cochinchina. For many renouncers these advantages outweighed the main obligation, already discussed, of military service. Indian 'renouncers' resident in Cochinchina could vote to elect a 'Deputy' to the French parliament to represent their interests as French citizens in the colony. They also had the same privileged political representation as metropolitan Frenchmen in colonial and local council elections. Where employed by the state, as many of them were, they were entitled to salaries at European levels, with paid passages for home leave, admission to European hospitals and other colonial 'supplements'. Like other French citizens, they were exempt from personal tax in Cochinchina and their children could benefit from the superior schooling reserved for French citizens.¹⁵⁰ Should renouncers, despite these advantages, end up in prison, they were entitled to the same treatment as Europeans, an important aspect of which was a reprieve from the hard labour to which native Cochinchinese detainees were subjected.¹⁵¹ They had the right to travel freely to the Metropole where they could exercise their citizenship rights, barring, as I have mentioned, the ability to be employed there in the public service. A Mr. Samy, former administrator of the Indochinese Civil Services, retired to the rue de Rivoli in Nice in the 1930s. A reflection of the two sides of the right to 'renounce', he occupied his time there engaged in appealing to the League of Human Rights to have a French pension paid to him in full.¹⁵²

Although colonial societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are noted above all for their racial divisions, people classed as 'French' or 'European' in French Cochinchina were much more heterogeneous than is often thought.¹⁵³ Renouncers in Cochinchina were one of the largest groups of French citizens who were not of Metropolitan origin, but they were not the only such group. Within the broader

¹⁵⁰ VNA2 Service Local personal files (*dossiers individuels*) of renounced Indians employed by the Cochinchinese administration; VNA2 GGI 42279 Charges fiscales des Indiens sujets français non-renonçants établis en Cochinchine 1915: GGI to MMC, 21 January 1915; VNA2 1A.6/244(6) Instruction Publiques...Demande de création d'une école indienne à Saigon présenté par Mme Vve Pochont, 1907.

¹⁵¹ VNA2 1A.2/065(1) Prison Centrale...régime alimentaire des détenus indiens 1906.

¹⁵² LDH Box 85 1938: M. Samy to Lt MMC, 28 March 1938.

¹⁵³ Stoler (*Carnal Knowledge*) makes this same argument for the Dutch East Indies, as does Vann for Indochina, although his treatment of 'Chetty' migrants is misleading. Michael Vann, 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Variation and Difference in French Colonial Racism', in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (eds.), *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, 187-205.

classification of 'Europeans', too, ('a legal rather than an ethnic basis of distinction') they were joined by others who were not European by birth or parentage but enjoyed the protection of European law.¹⁵⁴

For a start, there were other migrants besides renouncers who both came from French India and held French citizenship. French Indian créoles were either French settlers in French India who claimed 'pure' French blood or people of mixed Indian and European origin. The former firmly identified themselves with the European community while the positioning of the Indo-French, that is those who acknowledged or could not disguise their Indian heritage, was less firm. In the early decades in colonial Cochinchina the Indo-French existed somewhat apart from the renouncers, even though they were often put together with the renounced Indians, mainly on account of their Indian appearance, and some of them may have renounced in order to obtain citizenship. By the 1920s however they had developed shared interests. Although we know there were far fewer créoles (mixed or otherwise) than renouncers in Cochinchina, the organisation of the census in Indochina, as Robequain notes, makes it difficult to firmly establish their exact number. Some indication is given by a list of persons 'originating from French India' and employed in the Cochinchinese administration in 1937, which maintained that only eight out of sixty-three such employees was a *créole* ('mixed blood or otherwise'), all others being 'renounced' French citizens.¹⁵⁵

Cochinchina had the highest percentage of 'Europeans' within its total population (0.35%) in comparison to the other Indochinese possessions, but French citizens born in the Metropole or with both parents born in France made up only a third of all persons (approximately 7000 of some 16 000) with the legal status of Europeans in 1937.¹⁵⁶ Even then, many were from peripheral areas of France, most notably Corsica.¹⁵⁷ One source puts the number of Corsicans in Saigon alone in the late 1930s at 1200 people.¹⁵⁸ The presence of approximately 700 migrants from other European countries raised the

¹⁵⁴ Robequain, *Economic Development*, p. 22.

¹⁵⁵ VNA1 GD1812 Listes des fonctionnaires originaires de l'Inde française 1933: GEFI to GGI, 21 September 1937.

¹⁵⁶ Following Robequain's Indochina-wide estimates. Robequain, *Economic Development*, pp. 21, 23-24.

¹⁵⁷ Robequain, *Economic Development*, p. 25; Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta*, p. 104.

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Louis Pretini, 'Saigon-Cyros', in Philippe Franchini (ed.), *Saigon 1925-1945 De la 'Belle Colonie' à l'éclosion révolutionnaire ou la fin des dieux blancs*, Paris: Editions autrement, 1992, 92-103 (p. 101).

number of 'pure whites' to almost half of the total 'Europeans' in Cochinchina. Naturalised Vietnamese and Vietnamese *métis* (of mixed Vietnamese and French parentage) made up another third of people classified as 'European' (1800 and 3500 persons respectively). The latter had obtained citizenship through their (French) fathers' recognitions (*reconnaissances*) of paternity or, as later became possible, through naturalisation.¹⁵⁹ The other significant group of 'Europeans' were Frenchmen from the Mascarenes and the French Antilles. Some were pure-blooded Europeans but like the French Indian créoles many were of mixed parentage.

Two other small groups were classified as 'European' in colonial Cochinchina. Japanese enjoyed the protection of European law by virtue of treaties guaranteeing 'equal treatment' (1858, 1907)¹⁶⁰. Natives of the Philippines (*tagals*) were also permitted, under a Cochinchinese decree of 1897, to enjoy the rights of Europeans in the colony. Most were ex-soldiers who had fought alongside the French in the conquest of Cochinchina and subsequently settled there.¹⁶¹ Japanese accounted for only 84 persons in the colony in 1937 and *tagal* numbers were equally modest.¹⁶² Although the number of *tagals* in Cochinchina was very few, and their right to enjoy the protection of European law was repeatedly called into question, *tagal* rights fed into debates over renounced Indians' status in Cochinchina.¹⁶³ To complicate matters, Indians migrants who did not hold French citizenship (Indians who were either French or British subjects) were also considered to be assimilated with Europeans for certain provisions of the law, as I explain in the next section.

¹⁵⁹ Robequain, *Economic Development*, pp. 22-25. See Emmanuelle Saada, *Enfants de la colonie*, for changes in regulations regarding citizenship and *métis* in Indochina.

¹⁶⁰ ANOM FM NF 164 Relations Extérieures Statut des Étrangers: Rapport du GGI sur le statut personnel des étrangers en Indochine 1908.

¹⁶¹ VNA2 Goucoch ILA45/271(2) Contrôle des asiatiques étrangers: Frères Amio 1915-1917.

¹⁶² My estimates based on Robequain's remarks in *Economic Development*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁶³ VNA2 GGI20404 Extrait d'un arrêt de la cour de cassation condamnant le sieur Amio Martin sujet philippin à 50 F d'amende pour détention d'armes à feu sans permis 6 mai 1910; ANOM GGI42315 Étrangers en Indochine, Décret du 30 juin 1929: Application du décret du 30 juin aux asiatiques non-énumérées à l'arrêt présidentielle du 30 août 1871; VNA2 CP8768 (1) Séance 2-12-1872 Réclamation Sieur Rangassamy quant à l'impôt de capitation; VNA2 SL2582 Liquidation de compte de prévoyance de M. Adiccam, comptable du 2^e classe, 1888.

Status in Cochinchina of other migrants of Indian origin

Indians living in Cochinchina who were not French citizens fell into one of two categories. If they originated from the French Establishments in India but had chosen not to renounce their personal status, they remained French subjects, albeit with a status distinct from the French subjects native to Cochinchina. They were sometimes called 'non renouncers' (*non-renonçants*). Migrants originating from parts of India under British rule were classified in Cochinchina, with the Chinese, as 'Foreign Asians'. However, for some purposes, neither they nor the Indian French subjects were legally 'Asian'.

The legal standing of Indians in Cochinchina, already complex, was made more complicated by the continued application of an 1871 presidential decree which determined that no one of Indian 'race' was classified as 'Asian' for legal purposes. The purpose of the decree was to define which 'racial' groups then present on Cochinchinese soil were subject to *Annamite* law (which continued to regulate, albeit through French courts, all civil and commercial contracts between *Annamites* and Asians) and which to French law. All indigenous groups and 'races' of migrants considered to be present in Cochinchina prior to French rule were collectively considered to have become French protégés following the conquest, and were consequently subject to *Annamite* law. These included, 'the Chinese, the Cambodians, the *Minh Huong*, the Siamese, the *Moïs*, the Cham and the 'mixed bloods', (Malays from Chau Doc)'.¹⁶⁴ 'All other individuals', the decree went on 'regardless of the race they belong to, are subject to French law'.¹⁶⁵ Indian migrants fell into this latter category, although given the modest number of Indians in the colony at the time, they were probably placed there more accident than design as they were not specifically named in the decree.

Although for renouncers, the securing of recognition of their French citizenship meant that the 1871 decree came to hold little significance, it remained important for

¹⁶⁴ *Minh Huong* were the offspring of Chinese migrants and local Vietnamese women; *moïs*, from 'savages' in Vietnamese, referred to the peoples of the Vietnamese Central Highlands.

¹⁶⁵ ANOM FM (B05) NF164 Relations Extérieures: Statut des Etrangers. Rapport du GGI sur le statut personnel des étrangers en Indochine 1908.

determining the status in Cochinchina of both Indian French subjects and British Indians. Both groups remained 'legally assimilated' with Europeans, although changes in legislation altered this status over the years. One element which remained constant was the application of French commercial law to these categories of Indians. The ability to pursue debtors with the backing of the French legal system was particularly important to Indian moneylenders. Indian French subjects and British Indians were both assimilated with Europeans for the purposes of incarceration. Like renounced Indians, they were entitled if imprisoned to the relative comfort of quarters reserved for convicted Europeans and could forgo forced labour. The exercise of these privileges, however, depended upon whether they were recognised. Several cases document how Indian prisoners, particularly when they were incarcerated far from the urban centres, did not enjoy the 'European' treatment which was their legal right.¹⁶⁶

In civil cases, Cochinchinese courts upheld the principle, dear to French Imperial law in India but also to the British legal system in the subcontinent, that 'a Hindu or *Muhammadden* carries his personal law with him wherever he goes'.¹⁶⁷ This meant that Indian subjects (both British and French) were allowed to have births, marriages and inheritances regulated on Cochinchinese soil according to personal laws applicable to them as Muslims or Hindus in India.¹⁶⁸ This tolerance in Cochinchinese courts for the exercise of migrants' indigenous personal laws differs from the situation of migrants to parts of Britain's overseas empire. In Fiji in the early twentieth century, for example, British legislators were vehemently opposed to allowing the marriages of Indian indentured labourers on the island to be regulated by Indian personal laws.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ See VNA2 IA.2/015(3) Affaire Chavanne - Leidou-Mogamadou 1874 Dossier Chavanne 1877; VNA2 IA.2/065(1) Prison Centrale...régime alimentaire des détenus indiens 1906; VNA2 GD445 Peine administrative infligée par le Chef de la province de Cantho contre M. Yaccoumsah, indien sujet anglais, 1925; ANOM GGI42329 Etrangers en Indochine. Dans quel établissement pénitencier les indiens sujet anglais doivent-ils purger leur peine 1930.

¹⁶⁷ Quote from Legislative Council of Madras, quoted in John D. Kelly, 'Fear of Culture: British regulation of Indian Marriage in Post-Indenture Fiji', *Ethnohistory*, vol. 35, no.4, 1989, 372-391 (p. 374).

¹⁶⁸ See 'Pathmabivv versus Ka-Abdul Radjah 1902', in Dareste, Appert and Legendre, *Recueil de législation et jurisprudence coloniale*, Paris: A. Challamel, 1903 edition, pp. 32-34; 'Tran Thi Bu versus Aissouamalle and others', in Dareste et al., *Recueil* (1903), pp. 58-70.

¹⁶⁹ Kelly, 'Fear of Culture', p. 372.

In the area of taxation, Indian French subjects were initially, like Europeans, exempt from payment of personal tax. This right was withdrawn, reinstated in 1870 through the forceful petitioning of Rangassamy, a Saigon-based publican, and withdrawn a second time in 1915 due to wartime concerns that *Annamite* loyalty was being tested by 'the particularly privileged situation' from which 'non-renounced French subjects' benefited.¹⁷⁰

The tax and immigration situation of British Indians fell under rules pertaining to Foreign Asians (*étrangers asiatiques*). Unlike Indian French subjects, their obligation to pay personal tax was never in question. Their taxation, like their immigration, was regulated by the system of 'congregations' (French *congrégation*, *bang* in Vietnamese), migrant groups led by elected chiefs charged with guaranteeing the good conduct of their members. These were originally organised in the Ming Mang period to manage Chinese immigration, and adapted in Cochinchina under French rule.¹⁷¹ Formal congregations for British Indian migrants, introduced in Cochinchina in 1874, were organised along religious lines (their Chinese counterparts were grouped by dialect).¹⁷² Saigon and Cholon in the late nineteenth century supported between them at least two (Indian) Muslim and two Hindu congregations. Indians residing in the interior, if there were very few of them in one locality, were sometimes made to join Chinese congregations, a stipulation which was not always to their liking.¹⁷³

Outside of Cochinchina, congregations were organised for a brief period in the 1910s in the French-controlled cities of Hanoi and Haiphong.¹⁷⁴ Otherwise, taxation and

¹⁷⁰ VNA2 CP8768(1) Séance 2-12-1872 Réclamation Sieur Rangassamy quant à l'impôt de capitation; VNA2 GGI42279 Charges fiscales des Indiens sujets français non-renonçants établis en Cochinchine 1915: Deliberations of Colonial Council, 11 November 1914.

¹⁷¹ John Clammer, 'French Studies on the Chinese in Indochina: A Bibliographical Survey', *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1981, 15-26 (p. 21); Vimeux, *De l'immigration en Cochinchine et les taxes spéciales aux Immigrants asiatiques*, Paris: Challamel Aîné, 1875, p. 18.

¹⁷² VNA2 SL1825 Arrêté soumettant les Indiens et malais non-sujets français au régime de la congrégation 1874.

¹⁷³ See VNA2 IA.12/164(1) Bạc Liêu: Demande présentée au nom des Indiens habitant Bạc Liêu à l'effet d'obtenir un chef de congrégation, 1897.

¹⁷⁴ ANOM GGI50951 Réclamation des indiens de Hanoi et de Haiphong contre les procédés de service de l'immigration de Saigon 1916.

immigration matters for British Indians and Indian French subjects in the protectorates were the responsibility of their employers.¹⁷⁵

A large proportion of Indian French subjects and of British Indians were Muslims. Most of these were from the Tamil region of South India, from the French town of Karikal and its surrounding villages (especially Mayavaram) and from neighbouring Tanjore district in British India, and in particular the town of Koothanallur. With the increased urbanisation of business centres in India, Madras gradually became an important base, too, for South Indian Muslim trade in Indochina.¹⁷⁶

Table 2 Population and distribution of South Indian Muslims in Cochinchina, 1926

South Indian Muslim Population, Cochinchina 1926				
city/province	British subjects	French subjects	French citizens	TOTAL
Saigon	370	123	7	500
Cholon	175	31	4	210
Tay Ninh	15	0	0	15
Baria	7	3	0	10
Tan An	13	2	0	15
Gia Dinh	45	15	0	60
Lai Thieu	20	5	0	25
Thu Dau Mot	30	20	0	50
Bien Hoa	5	10	0	15
Mytho	50	20	0	70
Ben Tre	12	8	0	20
Tra Vinh	50	10	0	60
Cai Lay	5	0	0	5
Vinh Long	20	5	0	25
Cantho	40	10	0	50
Soc Trang	10	10	0	20
Bac Lieu	20	5	0	25
Sadec	30	0	0	30
Long Xuyen	13	2	0	15
Rach Gia	30	10	0	40
Chau Doc	3	6	1	10
TOTAL	963	295	12	1270
source: CAOM GGI 65476 Service de Sûreté, Rapport Annuel (1926-1927) du Commissariat spéciale du port de Saigon-Cholon.				

In 1926 there were 1270 South Indian Muslims (not counting dependents) in Cochinchina, the majority living in Saigon and Cholon. Of that number only twelve were

¹⁷⁵ ANOM GGI42303 Emigration en Indochine. Décret du 30 juin 1929. Réclamation du Consulat Général du Royaume Unis relative à la procédure du remboursement des sommes consignés par quatre Hindous 1931; VNAI RST3711 Demande des certificats de départ à destination de leur pays d'origine formulée par des Indiens Asiatique étrangers résidents au Tonkin 1932; ANOM RST02104 Expulsion des étrangers (indiens etc.) 1933.

¹⁷⁶ Marcel Ner, *Les musulmans de l'Indochine française*, Hanoi: Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1941, p. 52; Discussions Mrs. M. Alam, Ho Chi Minh City January 1997; Interviews Raffiq Mohammed, Pondicherry, August 2004, Tony Bui, Pondicherry, 12 October 2004, G.M. Said family, Pondicherry, 20 November 2004.

renouncers, showing the infrequency with which Muslims from the French territories in India chose to renounce their personal status (see table above).

There were two broad social divisions within the overseas South Indian Muslim community. The largest group were 'Tamil Muslims' properly speaking, those who claimed descent from Arab Muslim traders and local Tamil women, (or local converts to Islam), and who retained many Tamil cultural practices. *Marakkayar* (*Marécar* in French), *Lebbais* and *Rawthers* were all Tamil Muslims and all were present in Cochinchina, although it remains unclear whether the latter two groups were branches of the larger *Marakkayar* group, or separate and hierarchised caste-like entities.¹⁷⁷ A much smaller group of South Indian Muslims differed from the Tamil Muslims in claims of origin and purity. Some were of Turkish or Afghan descent (thus *Tulukars* and *Pattanis* respectively), and *Sayyids* claimed (Arab) descent from the prophet. South Indian Muslims who were not ethnically Tamil had come to the Tamil country by way of Northern India. Although these migrations had taken place several generations previously, they continued to keep Tamil culture at arms' length.¹⁷⁸

Of the Hindus present in Cochinchina the most important group was the tightly-knit caste of Nattukottai Chettiars, from Chettinad in South India, known in Indochina as elsewhere in Southeast Asia for their banking activities.¹⁷⁹ Although the Nattukottai Chettiars were its source, the term 'Chetty' could be used to mean anyone in Cochinchina from the Indian subcontinent.¹⁸⁰ In other contexts it could mean (often as a slur) any Indian moneylender, or any moneylender regardless of race. A 'yellow Chetty' was

¹⁷⁷ For these terms used as titles by expatriate Tamil merchants, see *Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine 1912*, Hanoi : IDEO, p. 188.

¹⁷⁸ It is not always possible to reconcile the divergent claims about these groups made in the literature. The information here is based on Vinson, 'Les musulmans du sud', p. 203; Delval, *Musulmans français*, pp. 135-136; J.B.P. More, 'The Marakkayar Muslims of Karikal, South India', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1991, 25-44.

¹⁷⁹ See Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta: Economic development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1812-1941*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1974; David West Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India, the Nattukottai Chettiars*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994; Rajaswary Ampalavanar Brown, *Capital and Entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia*, Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994.

¹⁸⁰ See for example Jean Marquet, *Les Cinq Fleurs, l'Indochine expliquée*, Hanoi: Directeur de l'instruction publique, 1928, p. 23.

depicted in a cartoon in the Vietnamese newspaper *La Tribune Indigène* during the 1919 Chinese boycott.¹⁸¹

In Indian usage, the suffix ‘-chetty’ could be added as a title to Tamil names to denote associations with finance or trade, and there were some such ‘chettys’ by name in Cochinchina who were distinct from the specific caste of Nattukottai Chettiars.¹⁸² They were among the small networks of other Tamil Hindus (probably mostly from French India) who operated in small trades and enterprises in Cochinchina throughout the colonial period. They probably hailed from several castes which had begun to be upwardly mobile in India from the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸³

France’s possessions outside of the Tamil country, as I have said, drew negligible numbers of people to Indochina. Several trading networks from other parts of British India, however, had interests in Cochinchina. These included Bhora, Parsi and Sindhi merchants, known collectively throughout Indochina as ‘Bombay’. Similarly mis-named were the so-called ‘Bengalis’ who worked as night watchmen, guards, and petty traders and were primarily Pathans and Punjabis Sikhs.¹⁸⁴

Indians who did not hold French citizenship are not directly the subject of this thesis. However, their identities and their lives as migrants in Cochinchina intersected with those of renouncers in so many ways. This is particularly true of those who were from French India and to whom some of the same legislation from that territory (particularly electoral legislation) applied. The common cultural and linguistic bond that the many Tamil migrants shared also drew the Indian French citizens into some form of Tamil community, as the chapter which follows shows. Thus it helps to understand who other Indian migrants were both in order to better clarify who the renouncers were, and to

¹⁸¹ *Tribune Indigène*, 2 October 1919.

¹⁸² Anthony, *Gazeteer*, p. 360; Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism*, p. 423.

¹⁸³ Based on Esquer, *Les castes*, and Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*. And see Chapter Three.

¹⁸⁴ ANOM GGI65476 Service de sûreté, Rapports annuels : Service de sûreté, Rapport annuel (1926-1927) du commissariat spéciale de la port de Saigon-Cholon, pg. 349. On ‘Bengalis’ in Southeast Asia see Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, pp. 52, 128.

recognise and place other Indians when they feature, as they do, in some of the incidents, events and debates which form the substance of this study.

Conclusion

The right of Indians residing in the French Establishments to 'renunciation' of their personal status issued both from the wider project to create French citizens throughout the French empire, and from local causes, both political and social, in India. Indians who chose to renounce claimed to be seeking equality, both with their colonial masters and within Indian society. In practical terms, what they sought was social mobility within the French system. Historians of French India have claimed that renunciation was of little significance in India as it did not take off there as a widespread movement. In effect, however, the circumstances of French India in the late nineteenth century held the movement back. Renouncers were drawn in disproportionate numbers to French Indochina because opportunities for them to advance within colonial society were more abundant there. In Indochina, or Cochinchina more precisely, renouncers found too, that they were in a much more powerful position to defend their rights as citizens, in the decades during which the legal meaning of renunciation continued to be contested. Their extraterritorial efforts to secure their legal assimilation only served, however, to accentuate the unevenness of the French project to produce colonial citizens. Like Indians from the French possessions, the *Annamites* of Cochinchina had been given a legal means through which they could obtain French citizenship. But even though the legal decrees pertaining to India and Cochinchina were drafted using virtually the same wording, they made citizenship available in vastly different ways. For the indigenous peoples of Cochinchina, French citizenship came only by the good graces of French authority, and only after one had proved one's worthiness to be a Frenchman. Indians from the French possessions could freely choose to become French citizens through renunciation.

In the second half of this thesis, I further my arguments that the movement of renouncers to Indochina gave more impetus to the movement that it was able to gather in India, and that renouncers' 'surfeit' of privilege in Cochinchina, relative to the people

native to the colony, had an important influence on the shape Vietnamese responses to colonialism were to take. To properly appreciate the complexity of these questions, though, we must first understand that while striving for recognition of their French legal status renouncers were at the same time part of an overseas Indian, or more correctly Tamil, social and commercial world. In the chapter which follows I build up a more detailed picture of how the overseas Indians were occupied in Cochinchina and where the renouncers were placed among them.

Chapter Three: Renouncer occupations and wider Tamil networks

This chapter examines the full scope of renouncer employment in Cochinchina. It includes both the niches within which renouncers were typically employed, in direct service to the French, and their involvement, both directly and indirectly, in the numerous activities in which other Tamils were characteristically occupied in the colony.

Primarily, renouncers staffed Cochinchina's colonial administration, including its municipal police forces. They also worked as professionals (albeit to a limited extent), in employment in clerical positions in French firms, and as recruits in the army. The latter positions were in themselves seen by many soldiers as their ticket to civilian employment in Cochinchina. But some renouncers, for whom the secure life of a colonial functionary was too modest an ambition, ventured into entrepreneurial activities. When they did so, they were almost always drawn into typically Tamil activities. The range of Tamil commercial enterprises in Cochinchina was very broad, but long-distance trade was securely dominated by two groups, South Indian Muslim merchants (mainly British Indians and some French colonial subjects) and Chettiar bankers from British India. This dominance is consistent with studies of Indian business overseas which observe the 'deeply segmented' nature of long-distance trading networks.¹⁸⁵ However, while such networks of traders originating from discreet localities in South India can be identified in Cochinchina, they were not as tightly-knit as the literature on long-distance trade might suggest. Although trading networks made up of Tamils with distinct social profiles clearly existed, this did not preclude the entry of other Tamils who did not fit these social profiles, including renouncers, into such occupational specialisations. Furthermore, renouncers' closeness to and understanding of the French colonial system, relative to other overseas Tamils, also facilitated the conduct of Tamil business in Cochinchina in a multitude of ways.

¹⁸⁵ Claude Markovits. 'Indian Merchant Networks outside India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Preliminary Survey.' *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1999, 883-991 (p. 902).

The areas in which most renouncers were employed in Cochinchina relied closely on French interests in the colony, and they played important intermediary roles, especially in the administration. As we shall see in the coming chapters, they firmly professed themselves in legal and political contexts, too, to be part of the French empire. However, as this chapter demonstrates, they were also vital players in a Tamil overseas community in Indochina, with Saigon as its hub.

The development in early twentieth century South India of social and political reform movements which drew their power from nurturing a Tamil ethnic consciousness has generated much scholarly literature and debate. It is not, however, this weightier sense of 'Tamilness' that I call up in this chapter. When I speak of a 'Tamil community' the term is merely meant to convey a sense of community generated by everyday practice. It refers to the ways in which people with a common language and shared cultural references acted in conjunction with one another while resident overseas. This in itself is important as a context within which the debates surrounding renouncers' political and social rights in Cochinchina took place. The more socially and politically charged sense of Tamil identity, which emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in South India with the rise of the Non-Brahman movement, the Justice Party and the Self Respect movement, did not carry the same appeal in French India, or among overseas Indians who originated from the French possessions, as it did for British Indians. No doubt the reason for this is that these Tamil movements were statements of the inability of Tamils to advance specifically under conditions created by British rule.¹⁸⁶ The main Franco-Tamil newspaper printed in Saigon switched from publication in French to publication in Tamil in the late 1930s, which suggests an increased self-consciousness within Cochinchina's overseas Indian population of their ethnic Tamil identity, but I have not had access to these newspapers to confirm this.

¹⁸⁶ Key works on the Tamil movements are Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India. The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969; Baker and Washbrook, *South India*; Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Finally, a note on the class makeup of the wider Tamil community in colonial Cochinchina. It differed from that of many other overseas Tamil communities because of the virtual absence of labourers among the migrants. Unlike other Southeast Asian countries in the same period, there was no influx of Indian contract labour to any of the territories of Indochina. Although a segment of the renouncer community was of *pariah* origin, such individuals were already removed from the labouring backgrounds from which they would have derived, by virtue of the modest French education which was their ticket to Cochinchina. Barring the servants and employees attached to some traders, the Tamil community in Cochinchina consisted of people with bourgeois and petit-bourgeois backgrounds.

Renouncers in the colonial administration

From the beginnings of the French conquest of Cochinchina, and throughout the period of French rule, the demand for French-speaking subordinate and middle-level functionaries in Cochinchina's colonial administration was met in part by Tamils from the French *comptoirs* of Pondicherry and Karikal. Indians were also employed as functionaries elsewhere in Indochina (notably in the Governor General's administration in Hanoi, and in the French-controlled municipalities of Hanoi and Haiphong) but to a much more limited extent; the French-run administrations in these localities were considerably smaller than the full colonial administration that was maintained in the colony of Cochinchina.

Many Indians working for the Cochinchinese administration were hired in posts normally reserved for Europeans, on European terms and with European salaries (*à titre européen, à solde d'Europe*). These tended to be middle-ranking positions requiring a mastery of French. This practice was in place from the mid 1860s, prior to the implementation of the renunciation law in India. By 1890, proof of renunciation had become a prerequisite for Indians to be hired to 'European' posts. While some Indians, usually the better-educated ones, were hired on 'European' terms, however, others took up more subordinate positions which were classified as 'native'. Indians employed on

'native' terms were not obliged to renounce their personal status, but they had to content themselves with native salaries and conditions. They appear, however, to have chosen without exception (according to the evidence available) to renounce too, causing difficulties for the administration which I discuss in Chapter Five. Thus although not all Indians employed in the Cochinchinese colonial administration were required to renounce their personal status, all Indians within the administration were effectively renouncers.

There are no figures available which accurately portray over time the total number of Indians employed within the Cochinchinese administration. More significant than such a figure, however, is the observation that Indians employed as functionaries were not scattered through the different services of the administration. Rather, they were concentrated in specific departments and in certain types of positions. Their positioning within the administration meant that they played key roles in mediating at ground level between French authority and the indigenous populations of Cochinchina.

Many of the Indians employed by the Cochinchinese administration filled clerical positions. 'Writers', (in the proper sense, prior to the advent of the typewriter), were among the earliest Indian functionaries to arrive in Cochinchina. Correspondence between the newly appointed Lieutenant General of Cochinchina, Admiral Ohier and the Commissioner Governor General of French India in May of 1868 reveals the French Governor engaged in 'recruiting the writers requested', 'young recruits from Pondicherry' who had signed engagements to work in Cochinchina and were due to sail for Saigon.¹⁸⁷ Indians from the French possessions continued to dominate clerical posts right up until the Second World War, as 'writers' and subsequently clerks and accountants, within many branches of the service. Interpreters of Tamil, like writers, were hired from the earliest days of French colonisation, suggesting the early presence of a critical mass of Tamil-speaking migrants in the new colony.

¹⁸⁷ ANOM, GGI10410 Personnel recruté aux Indes françaises 1868: GEFI to Lt-GGCCH, 6 May 1868 and 5 October 1868.

Some of the main services in which Indians were employed included colonial customs and revenue, and registration. They were employed throughout the customs and excise service (*Douanes et Régies*). This was one area where they were joined by French *créoles* settlers from French India and by Indo-French. Corsicans also featured prominently as employees in this service.¹⁸⁸ All three *porteurs de contraintes* (tax inspectors, or more precisely, men who carried executive mandates to those who had not paid their taxes, to press them to pay) employed in Cochinchina's treasury in the 1880s were Indian French citizens, and this continued as an Indian role.¹⁸⁹ In the Registration service (*Service de l'Enregistrement des Domaines et du Timbre*) Indians served as clerks, registrars, and bailiffs.¹⁹⁰

Renouncers were particularly well represented in the colonial justice system. The Pondicherrian magistrate Vennemani Cannoussamy, of note because of the intimate link of his case with the establishment of renunciation in French India, filled a relatively high position within Cochinchina's administration from an early date. He served as an appeal judge in Mỹ Tho from 1883.¹⁹¹ The period between the two World Wars saw a general rise in the number of Indian French citizens in the justice service in Cochinchina, including several Indians who attained posts comparable to Cannoussamy's. By 1938, one third of the clerks of court (*commis-greffier* and *greffier-notaire*) in Saigon's Court of Appeal and another third employed by the Saigon Tribunal were renouncers. So too were three out of eleven judges (*juges suppléants*) within the Court of Appeal. In the provinces, nine out of thirteen provincial tribunals had either Indian clerks of court or appeal judges.¹⁹²

Other areas in which the renouncers of French India found employment in the Cochinchinese administration were as postmen and guardians of public services such as

¹⁸⁸ See for example *ACCH 1887*, pp. 122-127. An extended comparison of renouncers and Corsicans is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, renouncers from French India, as colonial functionaries, frequently worked alongside Corsicans, or had Corsicans as their immediate superiors. Both groups shared a reputation in the colony for lobbying to reserve administrative posts for their compatriots. See Pretini, 'Saigon-Cymos', p. 101.

¹⁸⁹ Leconte, 'La migration des Pondichériens', p. 95; *ACCH 1884*, p. 176.

¹⁹⁰ Respectively *commis*, *greffiers*, and *huissiers*. See for example the Tamil names listed under this heading in *Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine 1908*, Hanoi: IDEO, pp. 186-187.

¹⁹¹ See NAIP DM 1883: Minister of Navy and Colonies to GEFI, 12 May 1883, and *ACCH 1884*, p. 156.

¹⁹² *Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine 1938-1939*, Hanoi: IDEO, pp. 62-67.

lighthouses and railways. Many of these positions became typically Indian jobs. The task of delivering the post became labelled an Indian role to the extent that the heading 'Indian postmen' was used in the colonial yearbook of 1938 to list the names of the twelve Tamils so employed.¹⁹³ Lighthouse guards too, were frequently Indians. In 1897, nine out of a total of sixteen men assigned to Cochinchina's lighthouses in Cochinchina had Tamil names.¹⁹⁴ Indians were also commonly employed as overseers during the construction of Indochina's railway networks, supervising 'Annamite' labourers. Typical of such employees was Gnanadicom Saverinaden, who oversaw the building of embankments at kilometres 142 to 200 on the main line trans-Indochina line under construction in 1908.¹⁹⁵ Indians also staffed the railways and tramways as conductors, guards, and other general employees.¹⁹⁶

As policemen, prison guards and other agents of security and surveillance Indians from the French Establishments also played predominant roles. In 1908, half the agents in the Saigon municipal police force were Indian (and virtually all other names were Corsican).¹⁹⁷ Of seventeen principal prisons guards (i.e. non-native) serving on the prison island of Poulo Condore in 1917, nine were Indian (and another seven had Corsican names).¹⁹⁸ Simon-Jean, the 'French' guard killed during the serious rebellion on Poulo Condore in 1918, was the bearer of a recognisable renouncer name.¹⁹⁹ Of the four medals of honour awarded to guards for good conduct during the same uprising, two recipients, Samy Beaumont and Saverinaden Dupas, were both Indian.²⁰⁰ Finally, Indians counted among the agents engaged by Cochinchina's Security Service (*Surêté*). The appointment of Evariste Marius as a Security inspector was announced in the pages of the *Indochine-Inde* in 1936, describing him as 'a child of the country (*un enfant du pays*) who is fluent

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 858.

¹⁹⁴ *Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine 1897*, Hanoi: IDEO, p. 42.

¹⁹⁵ *AGI 1908*, p. 306.

¹⁹⁶ For example VNA2 Goucoch IB29/233 Elections coloniales Inscription des natifs de l'Inde 1887 : 'Ville de Saigon. Elections coloniales et Législatives Années 1887-1888'.

¹⁹⁷ *AGI 1908*, pp. 336-337.

¹⁹⁸ *Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine 1917*, Hanoi: IDEO, p. 157.

¹⁹⁹ 'Rébellion à Poulo-Condore: Un bagnard d'un coup de massette tua raide le gardien Simon Jean', *Tribune Indigène*, 25 March 1918. For an account of this rebellion see Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille*, pp. 142-148.

²⁰⁰ 'Echos de la révolte de Poulo Condore', *Tribune Indigène*, 6 June 1918.

in Vietnamese'.²⁰¹ At least one other Indian from the French Establishments worked for the Security Services.²⁰²

The types of posts taken up by renouncers in Cochinchina's administration reflected, quite logically, the renouncers' levels of education. Renouncers with higher levels of education were found in the higher and middle-level posts, requiring professional or clerical skills and a mastery of French. Those in more subordinate posts, (many - but not all - of them classed as 'native' posts), were renouncers with poorer qualifications and more rudimentary levels of French.

Although renunciation was understood by many renouncers to mean a rejection of their caste identity, renouncers' caste origins continued to be evident in patterns of employment within the Cochinchinese administration. One could say that although they had ostensibly relinquished their caste attachments, caste status continued to strongly determine the level of education they attained and therefore the sort of employment they obtained. Throughout the French colonial occupation of Cochinchina, most renouncers in the higher and middle level administrative posts were of high caste *vellalla* origin. They were joined by a small number of *vannias*, another group who earned a reputation in Pondicherry in the late nineteenth century as a well-off, educated and upwardly mobile group. *Naidoo*s tended to favour careers in law and were predominate in the justice service.²⁰³ The subordinate '*petit fonctionnaire*' posts requiring no more than a *brevet élémentaire* (for example lighthouse watchmen, postmen, prison guards) became the province of renouncers of low caste or *pariah* backgrounds. Renouncers in the ranks of the police appear to have been more mixed.²⁰⁴

Underlying caste differences were part of renouncer understandings of their overseas community, even if, judging by the record available, caste in daily life was genuinely of little consequence to them, at least until the depression (see Chapter Seven).

²⁰¹ 'Dans les polices', *Indochine-Inde*, 16 February 1936.

²⁰² Interviews Dr. Claude Marius, Pondicherry, 23 September 2004, and Alfred Sinnas, Pondicherry, 10 October 2004.

²⁰³ Marius, 'Les Pondichériens dans l'administration', p. 393; Esquer, *Essai sur les castes*, p.120.

²⁰⁴ Miles, *Imperial Burdens*, p. 266; Michalon, 'Des Indes françaises', p. 45.

By contrast, official French communications about employees from French India show that French officials perceived differences between their renouncer employees to be distinctions purely of social class, opportunity and education. This is unlike the situation in the British Empire, where even British colonial officials outside of India often requested recruits of a selected 'desirable' administrative caste or a recognised 'martial race' to fill vacant posts.²⁰⁵ My research on renouncers in Cochinchina has uncovered but one reference in French documents to caste status.²⁰⁶ French officials in Cochinchina most certainly did not possess, or deploy, a detailed knowledge of the caste differences which may have existed, or persisted, among renouncers, or other Indians, resident in the colony.²⁰⁷

Indian French citizens, like their metropolitan peers, found work in Cochinchina through two avenues. Some participated in the colonial examinations (*concours coloniaux*) and were contracted prior to arriving in Cochinchina. Others were hired locally by the French administration, and relied until they could find employment on networks of friends and relatives already established in Cochinchina.²⁰⁸ The former route was relevant primarily to those applying for middle-level and higher-level positions requiring more advanced levels of French education. Official despatches between Pondicherry and colonial Indochina are replete with notices advising Indian functionaries that they have succeeded in their exams and been posted to Indochina.²⁰⁹ Those hired through the *concours* were the most mobile, even though they tended to be re-assigned within Indochina. Members of renouncer families alive today speak of childhoods spent moving from Saigon, to Phnom Penh to Hanoi, or between towns in the Mekong Delta.²¹⁰

Positions obtained through the *concours* were highly sought after. Those who succeeded could hope to enjoy the full advantages of European employment overseas.

²⁰⁵ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, p. 17.

²⁰⁶ See Chapter Seven.

²⁰⁷ Based on the many personal files (*dossiers individuels*) of renouncers employed by the Cochinchinese administration (VNA2, series 'service locale') and by the Government of Indochina (archive of GGI in ANOM and VNA1).

²⁰⁸ This phenomenon is mentioned by Mrs. Lourdes Louis, interview Pondicherry, 22 November, 2004, among others.

²⁰⁹ NAIP *Dépêches Ministérielles* throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

²¹⁰ Interview Antoine Saint-Jacques, Pondicherry, 15 January 2002; Mrs. Amélie Marius Le Prince, Pondicherry, 11 November 2004.

This comprised not only a European salary, but a 'colonial supplement' which doubled that salary. It also included paid passage to the colony for the employee and his immediate family and the right to a home leave (to India) of six months every three years.²¹¹ These European-level benefits in a colonial context were advantages over and above what French renouncers could hope to receive in Pondicherry. If they made renouncers' assimilation with Europeans more tangible, they in turn influenced the lifestyle which a certain class of renouncers adopted in Cochinchina. The settlement of the children and wives of Indian functionaries in Cochinchina, which began to occur before Metropolitan French women and children settled in the colony in any significant numbers, was an important development. In contrast to Indians migrating to other locations in the same period, (for whom the risk of ritual pollution was sometimes transformed into a bar on travel for women), renouncers in the late nineteenth century were remarkably relaxed in their attitudes towards bringing their wives overseas.²¹² When Savere Conjonnessamy's wife came to join him in Saigon in the 1870s, he expressed no concern that she should be travelling from Pondicherry, only that she should travel accompanied by people who could help her: 'Several families of Indian origin are due to come to Saigon on the ship which leaves Pondicherry next January and their assistance will be very helpful for my wife, who is unaccustomed to European habits'.²¹³

The presence of a core of renouncer families in Cochinchina encouraged other renouncers (in the administration and otherwise) to bring their wives and families to join them, even if it meant paying the passage themselves. By the turn of the twentieth century many of the renouncers living in colonial Vietnam had been born there, of Indian parents.²¹⁴ While many men still returned to India to seek marriage partners, the pool of renouncer women residing in colonial Vietnam was large enough that marriages were

²¹¹ Bertrand Camilli, *La représentation des indigènes en Indochine*, Toulouse: Imprimerie J. Fournier, 1914, p. 117.

²¹² On restrictions on the movements of Sindhi women see Markovits, *Global World*, pp. 266-267.

²¹³ VNA2 SL4269 Dossier Individuel de M. Conjonnessamy, (Savere) Porteur de contraintes du trésor 1873-1882 : Conjonnessamy to Treasurer Paymaster (*Tresorier Payeur*), 14 December 1875 ; Also VNA2 SL2110 Dossier Individuel de Apparayen, Pierre, secrétaire à la direction de 2^e classe attachés au Haras du 21 nov 1871 : Apparayen to Director of Interior, 9 March 1871.

²¹⁴ See for example NAIP C-372 Etat Civil, Tableau de recensement des jeunes français, naturalisés et renonçants ayant atteint l'âge de 20 ans révolus, Tableau de recensement des classes de 1887 à 1905.

also arranged and took place there. Franco-Tamil newspapers published in Saigon in the 1920s and 1930s are replete with notices of such unions.²¹⁵

Renouncers in the higher-ranking and middle-ranking administrative positions not only received the same benefits as their European peers but began to adopt for themselves the same trappings of a colonial lifestyle. Photographs from renouncer family albums, taken in colonial Vietnam from the 1920s onwards, depict typical scenes of men in white linen suits and topees, children in sailor suits or white lace dresses, and infants held in the arms of Vietnamese nannies while other native domestic servants stand by. The subjects are frequently posed outside of French-style colonial villas. (Those in more subordinate positions lived in the Chinese-style shopfront housing - *compartiments* in French - found in central Saigon). The only indication in these photographs that a French colonial lifestyle has not been unconditionally adopted by these Indian French citizens is that the women (with some exceptions) appear in saris (see Plate 3).

If the apex of renouncer ambition was a secure job in the French administration which made obvious their status as French citizens, this was only really fulfilled by the elite who succeeded in gaining the best contracts by winning the *concours*. The demand for jobs on local hire was just as fierce however. So intense was the flow of hopefuls from French India that from the 1890s through the 1900s Cochinchinese authorities were greatly concerned about the cost (which they were obliged to shoulder) of repatriating Indian French citizens who had come to Cochinchina and, unsuccessful in their pursuit of positions as functionaries, had fallen ill or succumbed to vagrancy and were unable to pay their fares home.²¹⁶ In 1908 the Cochinchinese Governor Outrey asked his superior in Hanoi to advise the Governor for French India (as well as high officials in Réunion and Corsica) that 'there are no available jobs in the service in Cochinchina in the foreseeable

²¹⁵ Such notices can be found throughout issues of the *Réveil Saigonnais*, *Saigon-Dimanche* and *Indochine-Inde* in this period.

²¹⁶ NAIP DM 1890 : Sub Secretary of State for the Colonies to GEFI, 25 April 1890; *MOEFI* 1882, 25 July 1882, Extract of a letter to the Governor of French India from the French Consul at Singapore, 29 June 1882.

future' and that those hopeful of employment in the public service were to be discouraged from coming.²¹⁷

Although many renouncer women were present in colonial Vietnam, they very seldom worked in the public sphere. I have not comes across any example of a Indian woman employed in the administration in Cochinchina, but it was not entirely unheard of elsewhere in Indochina. In Phnom Penh in the 1930s, Mme Clairon, (of the Pondicherry family who achieved success in Cochinchina despite caste barriers), was employed as a 'dame contractuelle' in a clerical position. She was honoured in 1931 for her 'extraordinary zeal'.²¹⁸

The role of Indians as intermediaries to French colonialism was nowhere more evident than in the administration. Although Indian migrants were not present in large enough numbers in Cochinchina for local people to encounter them at every turn, the specific niches they came to occupy within the colonial administration in Cochinchina meant they were at the interface of indigenous Vietnamese engagement with French authority. The face of French authority for the indigenous residents of Cochinchina would not always have been that of a white metropolitan Frenchman, or even a Corsican, but that of a Tamil from Pondicherry or Karikal. In the numerous services in which they were employed to undertake clerical duties or in offices where they were engaged with tax, customs and registration procedures, Indians from the French Establishments were at the frontline of Vietnamese contact with French bureaucracy. Where they were charged with the delivery of mail or with the supervision of lighthouses, trains or railway lines, they were visible to the Vietnamese as protectors of (French) public goods. In the colonial legal system, French law was filtered through not one but several Indian lenses. Many magistrates, legal clerks, and bailiffs were Indian and their numbers increased in the 1920s. For any Vietnamese brought before the court by a Chettiar moneylender, an interpreter of Tamil was also likely to be present.

²¹⁷ ANOM GGI2276 Rapatriement des Indigents provenant de l'Inde, de la Réunion et de la Corse. 1908: Lt Gov CCH to GGI, 1 May 1908.

²¹⁸ NAC 32753 Gratification accordée à Mme Clairon, dame contractuelle, en service au 4^{ème} bureau pour zèle extraordinaire.

Those most literally engaged in the business of colonial dominance, though, were the Indians in the urban police forces, the penitentiary system, the military, and the security services. In these positions they were both symbolically and effectively among those at the forefront of surveillance and control of the local population. It would not have been unthinkable for a local Cochinchinese in trouble with the law to have been arrested and tried by Indians, and imprisoned under the watch of Indian guards. Even their food, as we shall see later, may have been supplied by an Indian contractor.

A suppressed professional class

Although some attained positions of high standing within the administration, Indians trained in the law were unable to flourish as a professional class in Cochinchina. The same was true of anyone with medical training obtained in the French Establishments in India. Neither legal nor medical qualifications obtained in French India were fully recognised in Indochina.²¹⁹

Indians trained in the French Establishments could take up positions as legal clerks and, if they had attained the proper level, magistrates within the Cochinchinese administration. Any Indian who wanted to open a private legal practice, however, had to have been trained in France. Many settled for working as legal clerks in private French practices, where some specialised in serving an Indian clientele.²²⁰ Louis Sinnaya, employed by the lawyer Thiollier in the 1900s, received a salary of twenty piastres monthly per month and 'twenty percent on Indian affairs' which brought him another three hundred piastres per month.²²¹ Joseph Xavier, the one Pondicherry lawyer known to have run a private practice in Saigon (in the 1920s) had obtained his degree in France.²²²

²¹⁹ ANOM GGI2786 Les médecins de l'école de Pondichéry ne peuvent exercer la médecine en Indochine (requête Mariadassou) 1907; Interview Anna Xavier, Pondicherry, 17 November 2004.

²²⁰ See for examples VNA2 GD 2997 Mutuelle Hindoue 1935: 'Liste Nominative des Sociétaires de la Mutuelle Hindoue de Cochinchine', 1935.

²²¹ VNA2 SL4585 Réhabilitation formulée par M. Sinnaya (Louis) demeurant à Saigon 1902.

²²² Interview Anna Xavier, Pondicherry, 17 November 2004.

Likewise, the qualification obtained by graduates of the Pondicherry Medical School (*officier de santé*) did not permit them to practise civil medicine in Indochina. One renouncer, Paramanada Mariadassou, who in the 1900s pressed the authorities to allow him to practice in Cochinchina, had to settle for a post with the medical army corps, in Saigon and subsequently in Poulo Condore.²²³ The *créole* Edouard Marquis (who went on to become a journalist) was similarly qualified. A decade after Mariadassou, Marquis was also employed as a medic (*agent sanitaire*) in Poulo Condore (in 1918).²²⁴ The renouncer Dr. Tirouvanziam, the one Indian doctor who is known to have worked in civil medicine in Indochina, (he practiced in Saigon and Phnom Penh in the late 1920s and 1930s) was able to do so because he had trained in Montpellier.²²⁵

It was characteristic of renouncers who were unable in Cochinchina to exercise the professions in which they were trained to achieve success in other fields. These included, most notably, enterprise and journalism. Such individuals also took active leadership roles in French Indian mutual societies and within renouncer politics in Cochinchina. The legal clerk-turned-entrepreneur and publisher Louis Sinnaya was an example of such a figure at the turn of the twentieth century. Between the wars the businessman Appassamy Samy and the landowner Xavier de Condappa stand out. Although he was a *créole* and not a renouncer, the journalist Edouard Marquis can also be included in this list because of his close commitment to renouncer causes.

Employees of private French firms

Throughout the colonial period, Indians from the French possessions were often employed as accountants and other subordinate employees by French firms established in Cochinchina. The colonial directory of 1913 lists several French trading houses with Indians in their employ. In that year the entrepreneur Charles Bonnet had five men with typically renouncers names on his books (of a total of 11 employees), and a Mr. Annoussamy was in the employ of Denis Frères.²²⁶ By the 1930s, Indians were employed

²²³ ANOM GGI2786; VNA2 SL533 Dossier Individuel de Paramanada Mariadassou.

²²⁴ ANOM GGI33987 M. Marquis (Edouard) engagé comme Agent sanitaire contractuel à Saigon-Cholon.

²²⁵ Interview Mrs. Lourdes Louis, Pondicherry, 22 November 2004.

²²⁶ *Les adresses de l'annuaire de l'Indochine, édition du 2^{ème} sem. 1913*, Hanoi : IDEO, 1913, p. 250-253.

as accountants in a wide variety of European firms and organisations, from banks to oil companies to department stores to professional associations. Indians from the French Establishments were also employed in printing presses and later, with the rapid growth of the press in Cochinchina from the 1920s, on the staff of newspapers.²²⁷

Indians in these positions were not exclusively renouncers. One source has claimed that many such posts were filled by Hindus of the *reddiar* caste who tended not to renounce, and who had earned a reputation in Pondicherry (there is no record to verify whether this reputation transferred to Cochinchina) as 'good accountants'.²²⁸ However, sources that allow us to match names to given professions suggest that, by the 1930s at least, this niche of Indian employment was dominated by renouncers. Renouncers unable to enter the ranks of the 'favoured' by securing prized administrative posts settled for work with private French firms.²²⁹ These jobs had fewer benefits but were nonetheless attractive in comparison to work in French India.

Career soldiers and military service

Military connections between the French Establishments in India and French Indochina go back to the earliest days of the French conquest of Cochinchina when French troops stopped to draw supplies at the ports of Pondicherry and Karikal. Indians are known to have joined them aboard their ships, coming to serve as soldiers in the conquest of Cochinchina, and the other Indochinese territories as they were brought under French 'protection'. Some of these soldiers stayed on and settled. When Mougamadoucamy (or Mamoucani in the Vietnamese rendering of his name) wrote in barely literate French in 1902 to appeal to colonial authorities for financial help, he described how, originally from Karikal, he had arrived in the colony in 1852, 'comme simpelle solda a la guer Saigon [sic]' ('as a simple soldier in the fight for Saigon'). He had taken up with a local woman who had borne him ten children and had been employed

²²⁷ For examples see VNA2 Goucoch IB29/233: 'Ville de Saigon. Elections coloniales et Législatives Années 1887-1888'; VNA2 GD 2997: 'Liste Nominative des Sociétaires de la Mutuelle Hindoue de Cochinchine', 1935.

²²⁸ Interview Dr. Claude Marius, Pondicherry, 22 October 2004; In an address to an audience of renouncers in 1929 a speaker of metropolitan French origin referred to Indians from the French possessions more generally as trustworthy accountants. 'Un remarkable conference de M. Darles', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 1 September, 1929.

²²⁹ See VNA2 GD 2998 Mutuelle des Indo-Français employées de Commerce et d'Industrie 1934: Procès verbale de 22 Juillet 1934, Rapport Moral.

in various jobs tied to South Indian Muslim trade networks in the Mekong Delta (as a carter, salesman and collector of market taxes – see below).²³⁰ Another class of Indians from the French possessions – those who could speak, read and write in French – also came with the military in the days of the French conquest, and served as *magasiniers*, charged with managing the stores of the colonial troops. Men who served in such positions were often renouncers, or had children who renounced and followed careers in the Cochinchinese administration.²³¹

Some Indians from the French possessions were posted to Cochinchina having entered the French military as career soldiers. Once they did so, as I have mentioned, they found it advantageous to renounce their personal status. When it became obligatory for French citizens in the colonies to fulfil military service (from 1908 for French India) renouncers (as well as French Indian *créoles* and Indo-French) were called up in Saigon in this capacity.²³² The family ties which many of these renouncers already had in Cochinchina, and the colony's appeal as a place where decent employment could be found, meant that a preference quickly developed among soldiers of French Indian origin to be reengaged in Indochina, or, if a career soldier, to serve out the end of one's military service there, in order to remain and seek civilian employment. Ministerial despatches held in the Pondicherry archive are riddled with requests from Indian soldiers asking to be allowed to serve in Indochina, and preferably Saigon. Senior military officials were not always happy with this arrangement, but such requests were rarely refused.²³³ As one soldier, Christophe, put it in his request, he hoped in Saigon to 'find a job more easily than in Pondicherry', noting that the benefit of free passage to Saigon was another consideration.²³⁴

Indians were particularly visible in the popular eleventh Colonial Infantry Regiment (R.I.C.) posted in Saigon, to the extent that the Franco-Tamil newspaper *Saigon-Dimanche* ran for a time in the early 1930s a column entitled 'Gossip from the

²³⁰ VNA2 IA.12/149(11) Tân An demand de dégrèvement d'impôt demandé par le sieur Mamoucani (Indien) 1902.

²³¹ Marius, 'Les Pondichériens', p. 392.

²³² Clairon, *La renonciation*, p. 100.

²³³ See NAIP DM 1926 : Minister of Defence to Commander of the Indian Sepoy Corps, 7 May 1926, and numerous requests of this nature from the 1910s through the 1930s.

²³⁴ NAIP DM, 1913: MMC to GEFI, 8 March 1913.

11th R.I.C.'. ²³⁵ The presence of renouncers in the army in the heart of the city (the barracks of the eleventh R.I.C. were located opposite Saigon's Botanical gardens) added both to the growth of the community of renouncer families in Saigon and the development of a Tamil community in the city. Michalon claims most career soldiers were of *pariah* origin but this cannot be confirmed from other sources. ²³⁶ At certain levels of service recruits could seek permission to marry and were entitled to free passage for their wives and families to join them in the colony, while the lower orders who were not permitted to marry often took up with local women. ²³⁷

'Indian shops' and related niches of Muslim enterprise

From an early date, 'Indian shops' were ubiquitous in the large urban centres of Saigon and Cholon. They were also spread through the smaller towns of the Cochinchinese interior, and in towns and cities elsewhere in Indochina. Imported cloth was the mainstay of these shops, which also stocked garments, as well as fancy and general goods (see Plate 4). ²³⁸ The great majority of 'Indian shops' were run by Muslims from the Tamil region of South India. The value of this trade is uncertain as is the exact size of the trading population. We can guess it was not much smaller than the total number of South Indian Muslims residing in the colony (1270 in 1926) as most of them came expressly to engage in this trade. ²³⁹ The Cochinchinese trade, concentrated in the larger urban centres, supported the growing cities of Saigon and Cholon, as well as Gia Định, Saigon's north-western extension. South Indian Muslim trade also flourished in the rice growing regions and their transport hubs in the Mekong Delta (Mỹ Tho, Trà Vinh, Cần Thơ, Sa Đéc, Rạch Giá) and Thủ Dầu Một, the centre of rubber production, reflecting their role in bringing supplies to the expanding agricultural frontier. ²⁴⁰ Although Châu Đốc was, and remains, the centre of Cham Islam in the south of Vietnam

²³⁵ See NAIP DM 1910: Correspondence 19 April 1910; 'Cancans du 11^{ième} R.I.C.', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 7 June 1931.

²³⁶ Michalon, 'Des Indes Françaises', p. 45.

²³⁷ NAIP DM 1910: Re Filatriau (A.F.), 1 May 1911 (The soldier in question was a *créole*, but marriage regulations applied equally to all recruits); 'Un crime a Saigon. Le soldat Francisque tombe sous les coups d'une vengeance', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 6 February 1923.

²³⁸ VNA2 Goucoch IA.7/175 (9); Musée Commerciale : Marchandises Etrangères 1886.

²³⁹ ANOM GGI65476 Service de la Surêté, Rapport Annuel de Commissariat Spécial pour la port de Saigon-Cholon (1927-1928): Action Indienne. And see table in Chapter Two.

²⁴⁰ ANOM GGI65476: Action Indienne.

South Indian Muslim trade there was surprisingly limited.²⁴¹ The table in Chapter Two which shows the distribution of the South Asian Muslim population in Cochinchina (1926) follows these patterns closely.²⁴² The second largest centre in Indochina for South Indian Muslim trade was Hanoi where 280 South Indian Muslim men resided.²⁴³

South Indian Muslim merchants came from both British and French parts of India, but British Muslims by the 1920s far outnumbered their French peers.²⁴⁴ British Indians were considered to be the more successful businessmen and were generally better-off. Between the wars, the Saigon-based Koothanallur firm of J.M.M. Ishmael Brothers proved the rule, while the powerful Pondicherry firm of G.M. Said (also spelled Syed or Saed), with interests centred in Hanoi and across Tonkin, was the exception. These larger firms also generated employment for lower classes of overseas Tamils as their shopkeepers, cashiers, and servants.²⁴⁵ South Indian Muslims from the French possessions made up a disproportionate number of employees, as well as petty traders or agents.²⁴⁶

If few Muslim merchants were from French India, even fewer were renouncers. On one level French Indians, regardless of whether they were citizens or subjects, were valued as employees by British Muslims if they had skills in French and knowledge of the French system.²⁴⁷ Although South Indian Muslims seldom filled administrative posts in Indochina, there were exceptions to prove the rule. Mouhamed Hanif, for example, was both a close relative of the G.M. Said trading family (helping to manage these interests), and held a post within the Registration Bureau (*Service de l'enregistrement des*

²⁴¹ Ibid.; And see C.J. Baker, 'Economic Reorganization'; Intermarriage between South Indian Muslim men and Cham women was also less prevalent than one might imagine, probably, as Ner notes, because of resistance to Cham women marrying outsiders, even those who shared their faith. See Ner, *Musulmans de l'Indochine*, p. 163.

²⁴² ANOM GGI 65476: Action Indienne.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ ANOM RST02104 Expulsion des étrangers (Indiens etc) 1938.

²⁴⁶ VNA2 GD2995 Plainte au sujet de l'administration de la mosquée musulmane rue Amiral Dupré, 1933: 'Aout 1933: Note sur l'Affaire de la mosquée de Saigon.'

²⁴⁷ Interview Hajee Abdoul Hameed Maricar, Regional Kazi, Karikal, 19 September 2004; Interview S.M. Basheer Marécar, Deputy Regional Kazi, Karikal, 19 September 2004.

Domaines et du Timbre) in 1920s Hanoi. The latter position would have required him to renounce his indigenous personal status.²⁴⁸

Aside from the cloth trade, Saigon's 'Muslim brotherhood', as a French Security report of 1928 put it, was established in two other main activities: diamond dealing (a 1927 advertisement for the 'Maison Marekare' exclaimed '*Hêt Xoàn!* Diamonds!') and financial services.²⁴⁹ By 1910, South Indian moneychangers were installed the length of Catinat Street, Saigon's main thoroughfare.²⁵⁰ Others operated on a smaller scale sometimes as agents to larger employers.²⁵¹

South Indian Muslim trading networks also offered services enabling overseas Tamils of all backgrounds to transfer money back to India, and they were involved in money lending.²⁵² Probably due to the illegality in Islamic law of lending or borrowing with interest (*riba*), the latter was mainly in the form of purchases advanced on credit.²⁵³ Bankruptcy notices provide clear evidence of this practice, as does a 1910 advertisement for French cigarettes depicting a Tamil shopkeeper and his Vietnamese customer.²⁵⁴ Tamil Muslims based in Cochinchina's interior also acted on occasion as informal agents for Chettiar lenders, as I mention later.

Tamils who were modest entrepreneurs or petty traders were usually connected in some way to the larger, mainly Muslim, business interests. Tamil tailors were regularly listed in the colonial yearbook from the 1890s, their shops in Saigon routinely located in streets adjacent to areas where the cloth merchants conducted their trade.²⁵⁵ Tamils who plied Cochinchina's waterways carrying cloth and general goods into the more remote

²⁴⁸ *Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine 1926*, Hanoi: IDEO, p. 37; Interview Said family, Pondicherry, 20 November 2004; Interview Maurice Sinnas, Pondicherry, 7 October 2004.

²⁴⁹ ANOM GGI65476: Action Indienne; '*Hêt Xoàn!*', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 28 August 1927.

²⁵⁰ *Les adresses 1913*, 278-279.

²⁵¹ ANOM GGI65475 Service de la Sécurité Cochinchine Rapport Annuel 1924-26: rapport annuel 1er juillet 1926 à 1er juillet 1927, Les Indiens.

²⁵² Interview R.M. Krishnanchettiar, Tiruchchirapalli, 27 September 2004.

²⁵³ On *riba* and other rules pertaining to *Dar al Harb* (the community of the faithful overseas, literally in the 'land of war') as a contentious topic in Cochinchina's expatriate Muslim community see ANOM GGI65475: rapport annuel 1er juillet 1926 à 1er juillet 1927, Les Indiens.

²⁵⁴ '*Avis*', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 3 May 1924; '*Avis*', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 14 May 1924; *LTTV*, 12 March 1914.

²⁵⁵ *Les adresses 1913*, p. 270.

areas of the interior relied on South Indian Muslim trading houses for their stock, just as itinerant Cham traders in the Central Highlands were to do right up until the mid 1970s.²⁵⁶

Certain streets of Saigon were clearly zoned, from an early date, as areas of South Indian Muslim enterprise. In the 1880s, the *rue Vannier* near to the Saigon River was already an area of concentration of Tamil business.²⁵⁷ By 1908, nearly two thirds of the premises on rue Vannier were occupied by Tamil cloth merchants, moneychangers or 'retail vendors' (*marchands au détail*).²⁵⁸ Viénot street became another important location for Tamil trade. The Indian money changers continued to be located on Catinat Street block throughout the colonial period.²⁵⁹

Muslim dominance of these trading networks, however, did not preclude the involvement of other Tamils in the same businesses. The majority of cloth traders and moneychangers were South Indian Muslims but there were plenty of exceptions. In 1887, the Hindu (or possibly Christian) 'retail merchant' Kichenassamy occupied premises on Vannier street alongside eleven South Indian Muslim competitors.²⁶⁰ In 1889 Annasinnapoullé and Leupragalannaiker, most probably Hindus, ran their Catinat-based money changing shops alongside their Muslim compatriots and competitors.²⁶¹ Kayappa Adicéam, whose surname indicates he was from a well-known (Catholic) renouncer family, was a cloth merchant on Saigon's Vannier street in the 1900s, his shop situated alongside those of his Muslim compatriots.²⁶²

Nattukottai Chettiars and other Tamil bankers

Tamil moneylenders played an important role in financing rice production in the Mekong Delta and in extending both credit and savings services to merchants and

²⁵⁶ Discussion Hajjah Basiroh bin Haji Aly, Ho Chi Minh City, May 1997.

²⁵⁷ *ACCH 1887*, p. 106

²⁵⁸ *AGI 1908*, p. 410-411.

²⁵⁹ Rue Vannier now goes by the name Ngô Đức Kế; Viénot ran along the east side of the central (now Bến Thành) market) and Catinat has become Đồng Khởi (2008).

²⁶⁰ *ACCH 1887*, p. 106.

²⁶¹ *ACCH 1889*, p. 68.

²⁶² *AGI 1908*, p. 390.

functionaries in Cochinchina. The best-known of these bankers were members of the Nattukottai Chettiar banking caste, who began to arrive in Cochinchina in the 1870s.²⁶³ By 1930, 110 Chettiar banks were registered in Cochinchina. This number dropped following the economic crisis of the 1930s, to fifty-five banks in 1937, with a total of 170 Chettiars resident in the colony, including bank owners, agents and employees.²⁶⁴

Nattukottai Chettiars' main sources of income in Cochinchina were from money lending and rental properties (discussed in more detail in the next section) but they were occasionally involved in other auxiliary activities.²⁶⁵ Barring the losses they suffered during the economic crisis from 1929, Chettiars did very well out of their enterprises in Cochinchina. The total Chettiar credit amounted to fifty million piastres before the economic crisis, and had reduced by 1937 to twenty million piastres. Chettiars held a third (over six million piastres) of the total rice credit (of nearly twenty million piastres) in Cochinchina in 1937.²⁶⁶

The economic power wielded by the Nattukottai Chettiars was not gained without controversy. Reputed to be usurers because of the high interests rates they charged, this did not reduce the appeal for many clients of being able to borrow on low security.²⁶⁷ Debate began before the economic crisis of the late 1920s, and continued well beyond, over whether the Chettiar bankers should be more firmly controlled or expelled from the colony altogether.²⁶⁸ Nattukottai Chettiars were often accused of impoverishing poor farmers, even though evidence shows that it was larger landowners in the Mekong Delta

²⁶³ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine Française pour l'année 1877*, Saigon: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, p. 134.

²⁶⁴ VNA2 GD2992 Situation et rôle des chettys en Indochine, 1937: Report of Police service, Second Section, 30 August, 1937.

²⁶⁵ Interview R.M. Krishnanchettiar, Tiruchchirapalli, 27 September 2004.

²⁶⁶ VNA2 GD2992: Report GGCH to GGI, 9 December 1937; see also ANOM GGI65475: rapport annuel 1er juillet 1926 à 1er juillet 1927, Les Indiens.

²⁶⁷ VNA2 GD2992: Report GGCH to GGI, 9 December 1937; Interview R.M. Krishnanchettiar, Tiruchchirapalli, 27 September 2004.

²⁶⁸ For examples see VNA2 IB.24/147(3) Conseil Colonial: Cahiers des colons de l'Inde Française 1907 : *Ligue Française pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* to Canavaggio, VP of Colonial Council, 30 July 1907; E. Mathieu, *Les Prêts Usuaires et le Crédit Agricole en Cochinchine*, Paris : Recueil Sirey, 1912; Ch. Leonardi, 'L'Usure en Cochinchine', *Extrême-Asie*, May 1926, 226-231; Ernest Outrey, 'L'Intérêt bien compris de la Cochinchine doit nous engager à aider les banquiers indiens installés dans cette Colonie à reprendre leurs affaires de crédit', *Midi Colonial*, 19 December 1935.

(who often on-lent to tenant farmers) who were the Chettiar's biggest clients.²⁶⁹ Their other clients included indigenous public servants and other colonial *petits fonctionnaires*. Their modest salaries forced them to rely on the Chettiar's to 'make ends meet', and many also entrusted their savings to the banking caste.²⁷⁰

Chettiar men were noticeable in Cochinchina for their outwardly modest appearance while posted overseas, despite the fortunes they amassed there. Posted to Cochinchina for three-year stints, they lived and worked communally in the same sparse quarters. In conspicuous contrast to the European dress worn by renouncer men employed in the colonial administration, Chettiar's routinely went shaven-headed and bare-chested, their foreheads, chests and arms smeared with temple ash wearing only a long white loincloth (*vershti*) and a pleated neckcloth (*angavasthram*).²⁷¹ They made little concession to 'modern' European trends in dress until the late 1920s (see Plate 5).

Ohier Street in Saigon was the headquarters of the Nattukottai Chettiar's in Cochinchina.²⁷² The temple dedicated to Sri Thenday Yuttapani (Murugan) at one end of the street (constructed 1881), was both a centre of spiritual life and an integral part of banking operations.²⁷³ Banking establishments with barred windows (*kitangis*) which served both as home and bank for the Chettiar agents lined the street and a temple choultry (*chatthiram*) was another fixture of long date.²⁷⁴ A building housing the Nattukottai Chettiar Association was added in the 1930s.²⁷⁵

There were a number of Tamils operating as bankers in Cochinchina who were not part of the Nattukottai Chettiar corporation. The renouncer Ra. Soccalingam is a

²⁶⁹ See Mathieu, *Les Prêtres Usuaires*, p. 90; Phan Trung Nghia, *Công từ Bạc Liêu Sự thật và giai thoại* [Bạc Liêu Playboy, Truth and Myth], Ho Chi Minh City: Youth Publishing House, 2006, p. 27.

²⁷⁰ 'La Situation des Fonctionnaires et Employés Indigènes', *Echo Annamite*, 17 January 1920; VNA2 GD2992: Report GGCCH to GGI, 9 December 1937.

²⁷¹ S. Muthiah, Meenakshi Meyappan, and Visalakshi Ramasawamy, *The Chettiar Heritage*, Chennai: Madras Editorial Services, 2002, p. 268.

²⁷² Ohier is now Tôn Thất Thiệp (2008).

²⁷³ VNA2 CP8372 Arrêté du Gouvernement concédant un immeuble domaniale...aux Indiens sectateurs de Brahme pour y construire un temple 1881; Interview R.M. Krishnanchettiar, Tiruchchirapalli, 27 September 2004.

²⁷⁴ Interview R.M. Krishnanchettiar, Tiruchchirapalli, 27 September, 2004; Muthiah et al., *Chettiar Heritage*, p. 63.

²⁷⁵ The sign of the 'Association Indochinoise des Nattukottai Chettiar's' was visible until 2005 when the façade was taken down. The temple choultry, still standing, now houses two up-market restaurants and an ice-cream parlour (2008).

notable example. The 'well-known and highly esteemed banker' began his Cochinchinese sojourn in the 1900s as an official in the registration office and was one of several renouncers who, finding the secure life of a functionary did not fulfil their ambitions, struck out into private enterprise.²⁷⁶ Ra-Soccalingam appears to have become involved in land dealings and at some point, probably on the returns of property investments, turned to extending loans.²⁷⁷ Although he left behind his post as a functionary and entered the characteristically Tamil field of money-lending, Ra-Soccalingam remained an active leader in renouncer welfare and politics.²⁷⁸ He was not alone as a non-Chettiar banker in this period, but was joined by at least three others, the Cholon-based bankers Paquéry, Nadessapillai and Virapillai. Paquéry appears elsewhere as a surname adopted by renouncers; the other two were probably caste Hindus and had not renounced.²⁷⁹

The Franco-Tamil *Saigon-Dimanche* noted that during the 1920s, 'in the times of prosperity there were in Saigon twelve moneylenders, French subjects [sic], who should not be confused with the Chetties.'²⁸⁰ One who came to prominence during the economic crisis was Candassamy, a French subject, and one of the first Indian bankers to declare bankruptcy. As one of Saigon's Tamil bankers with whom many functionaries deposited large sums, his bankruptcy heightened emotions in the city, to the extent, as described in the pages of *Saigon-Dimanche*, that he was pursued by a distraught client (a Karikalais, as it happened) with a knife.²⁸¹ The Chettiar banking enquiry in 1937 reveals that these non-Chettiar bankers were not exclusively French subjects. One, listed among 'Chettys who appear to specialise in loans to functionaries' was a renouncer, Andre Roche, mentioned elsewhere as an employee at the newspaper *l'Impartial*. Another was the landowner Appapoullé.²⁸²

²⁷⁶ 'Banquet donné par M. Ra-Soccalingam en l'honneur de M. François Deloncle', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 16 April, 1910; *AGI 1908*, p. 68.

²⁷⁷ *AGI 1912*, p. 182.

²⁷⁸ 'Banquet donné par M. Ra-Soccalingam en l'honneur de M. François Deloncle', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 16 April, 1910.

²⁷⁹ *AGI 1912*, p. 182.

²⁸⁰ 'La Crise et les prêteurs d'argent', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 18 December 1932.

²⁸¹ 'La Crise et les prêteurs d'argent', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 18 December 1932.

²⁸² VNA2 GD2992: Report GGCCH to GGI, 9 December 1937.

Rudner has argued that the strong caste and clan organisation of Nattukottai Chettiars was the key to their ability to organise their banking business over long distances.²⁸³ While this might hold for the internal workings of the complex Chettiar financial network, there was a myriad of everyday forms of Chetty reliance on other non-Chettiar Tamils in Cochinchina. The peculiarities of Chettiar legal status in Cochinchina (as 'Foreign Asians' who were not legally 'Asian' in commercial courts) meant the presence of francophone Tamils at sites of French authority was particularly useful to them. Chettiars were not always conversant in either Vietnamese or French, (due to the short stays many of them undertook in Cochinchina) and so relied when they made use of French courts on Tamil interpreters, helpfully provided by the colonial government. Even though proceedings might be conducted in French, however, Chettiars often shared a mother tongue with many of those present in the courtroom, including the legal clerks, bailiffs, process servers and even at times the lawyers and the judges. In the 1930s, the renouncer and lawyer Joseph Xavier was regularly employed by the Cochinchinese Association of Nattukottai Chettiars. He came daily at six o'clock in the evening, as French authorities carefully noted, to the office of the Chettiar Association to advise them on legal matters and was charged with translating for the president of the association whenever necessary.²⁸⁴ (According to his daughter he also advised the Ishmael brothers during the Great Depression).²⁸⁵ A second lawyer working to defend the Nattukottai Chettiar position at the time of the economic crisis was a *metropolitain* whose assistant, Mr. Mouttayah, was a renouncer.²⁸⁶ The name of A.C. Mouttayah was recalled by the daughter of one Chettiar with operations in Saigon as 'a Pondicherry lawyer' and friend of her father's who negotiated on behalf of Saigon Chettiars.²⁸⁷

In addition to their reliance on Tamils from French India employed in the French Justice Service and in the legal profession, Chettiars had commercial connections with South Indian Muslim traders established in the provinces of Cochinchina. In at least one

²⁸³ David Rudner, 'Banker's Trust and the Culture of Banking among the Nattukottai Chettiars of Colonial South India', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1989, 417-458.

²⁸⁴ VNA2 GD2994 Demande de capacité juridique presenter par l'Association Indochinois de Nattukottai Chettiars 1940: Note from Special Commissioner for Saigon-Cholon ports to Chief of Security, 11 October 1930.

²⁸⁵ Interview Anna Xavier, Pondicherry, 17 November 2004.

²⁸⁶ 'Hindoue Tamoule Djana Sangam', *Indochine-Inde*, 8 March 1936.

²⁸⁷ Discussion Mrs. Mecnakshi Meyappan, 28 September, 2004.

case, Tamil Muslims acted, albeit informally, as agents to Chettiar bankers. In 1906 two bankers, Karouppanachetty and Sivaramanachetty, both holding trading licenses in Sóc Trăng, were accused of extending their operations to Bạc Liêu without paying the necessary licensing fee (*patente*) in that province. A closer investigation of their activities, conducted by village notables on the orders of the provincial administrator, found that they stayed during their regular journeys to Bạc Liêu in the shops of South Indian Muslims, the cloth merchants Kadermeidine and Sahithulevé respectively. In addition, one of the *Chettys*, Sivaramanechetty had a Muslim agent, Mougamadoumadarsah, working for him in Bạc Liêu: 'Through this agent he is averted, by post or by telegraph, of new requests for loans which he processes on his next visit to Bạc Liêu'.²⁸⁸ This is further proof of how South Indian Muslims participated indirectly in money lending in Cochinchina.

Not only did Chettiars rely on other non-Chettiar Tamils in Cochinchina in various ways, but the preponderance of Chettiars and their business interests on Ohier street in Saigon encouraged the presence of other Tamils, as tenants and entrepreneurs. A street directory of 1913 reveals that Tamils occupied virtually every address on Ohier street in that year. Besides numbers 21 to 31, which were listed as 'Chetty houses', eight Indian policemen lived there, all with surnames typical of renouncers, as did the dry goods merchant (*épiciér*) Mouttou. Three Tamil jewellers (Souppayapatter, Kamatchy and Aroquiassamy) were located in the street in the same year, with a fourth (Lazare Adécalamadin) occupying premises in the adjacent alley (*ruelle Ohier*). A petrol station belonging to the wealthy renouncer businessman Samy Appassamy (who is mentioned later) was positioned at the top of the street at Number One, and Number Three was his place of residence. The *Mutuelle de Karikal* was located a few doors' down.²⁸⁹

Livestock, transport, and milk

²⁸⁸ This and previous quote: VNA2 IA.12/162(5) Bạc Liêu, Deux Chettys patentés à Bạc Liêu, 1906 : *Contributions directes* to Lt GCCH, 30 October 1906.

²⁸⁹ *Les addresses 1913*, p. 286.

The earliest reference in French sources to any overseas Indian presence in Cochinchina comes from the Cochinchina Yearbook (*Annuaire de la Cochinchine*) of 1865. It reads as follows:

The 200 Indians whom we possess [*que nous possédons*] have managed to make themselves useful, and it is desirable that their numbers increase. Thanks to them the care of livestock is seen to, numerous carts [*chariots*] circulate, and some carriages for hire [*voitures de louage*].²⁹⁰

The little we know about this group of migrants is enough to maintain that they probably arrived initially from Pondicherry and Karikal, coming with the French military during its conquest of Cochinchina, on ships which are known to have taken supplies at Pondicherry before proceeding to Cochinchina.²⁹¹

Carters and drivers of carriages had connections to Tamils who raised bovids and produced milk, and probably also to the Tamil oil pressers (using cattle-driven presses) described in a later section of this chapter. Their work was also linked to contracts held by various Hindu businessmen in the late nineteenth century to furnish supplies and labour to the colonial administration, many of which were dependent on access to livestock. The same Hindu entrepreneurs, or their descendants, eventually entered into property dealing and banking in Cochinchina (see later sections). Many of these connections are evident in the career of Pajaniappatevane, who brought a complaint in 1899 against the local authorities for non-payment of his transport contract. He was described both as 'a merchant of milk, residing in Saigon' and as 'a former contractor of a public transport service, between Saigon and Tay Ninh'.²⁹²

The social origins of these men of livestock, transport, and milk are partially guesswork. Some Muslims were involved, but they were mostly Hindus, possibly from three South Indian castes which in the late nineteenth century, in Pondicherry as well as the surrounding British areas of the Tamil country, were noted for their enterprise and

²⁹⁰ *Annuaire de la Cochinchine Française pour l'année 1865*, Saigon: Imprimerie Impériale, p. 68.

²⁹¹ Pairaudeau, 'Indo-China: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia', p. 200.

²⁹² VNA2 SL3940 Transaction dans l'affaire PAJANIAPPATEVANE, adjudicataire du service des voitures publiques entre Saigon et Tay Ninh, contre l'administration pour paiement de diverses sommes 1898-1899,

drive for upward mobility. These castes included *yadavals* (specialising in the period in raising cows and milk production), *pattanavans* (originally fishermen but branching out into other enterprises), and *pallis* or *vannias* (variously merchants, bullock and pony cart drivers and oil pressers).²⁹³

In late nineteenth century Cochinchina Tamils operated bullock carts (*chariots*) for the transport of goods, coaches (*voitures*) for the transport of people and mail over longer distances between towns and cities (which we assume were horse-drawn) and small horse or pony-drawn carriages for short journeys within urban areas (see Plate 6). The latter vehicles came to be called *malabars* because of the erroneous use, widespread in late nineteenth century Cochinchina, of the term 'Malabar' for the Tamils who originally drove them.²⁹⁴ In the 1870s the French traveller Morice was pursued through Saigon's central market by 'black *Hindus* from Malabar [sic]' who cried 'Carriage, captain, carriage!' but 1907 the 'queer little vehicles' were being driven by native [Vietnamese] *sais*'.²⁹⁵

In the 1860s and 1870s Tamils filled service contracts in Cochinchina to supply bullock carts and drivers to government and to run long distance coach services.²⁹⁶ There is little trace, however, of Tamil-run bullock carts and long-distance horse-drawn coaches beyond the turn of the twentieth century. It is likely that, similar to the Malabar carriages, Tamils gradually moved out of these professions. Undoubtedly, technological changes and improvements in transport links also made these types of services less

²⁹³ Esquer, *Les castes*, pp. 105, 115, 120, 127; Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, pp. 14, 17, 179.

²⁹⁴ Gabrielle M. Vassal, *Three Years in Vietnam (1907-1910)*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999 [1910], p. 19.

²⁹⁵ Dr. A. Morice, *People and Wildlife in and around Saigon, 1872-1873*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1997 [1875], pp. 6, 8; Vassal, *Three Years*, p. 19.

²⁹⁶ See VNA2 CP7979 Cahier des charges pour la fourniture des voitures à bocufs à la journée [1869]; VNA2 CP8042 Constructions navales : marché pour l'entreprise générale des charrois et transports...soumission de POUNOUSSAMY...15 May et 12 juin 1869; VNA2 CP8005 Pont et Chaussée, marché de gré à gré avec l'entrepreneur NAGALINGAPOULLÉE pour l'achèvement des remblais du Blvd Bonnard. 15 avril 1874; VNA2 IA 20/186 (10) Voitures publics Saigon - Thu Dau Mot - Resiliation du marché Mou-Moussat. 1885-1891; VNA2 IA.20/224(4) Voitures Publics Biên Hoà - Bà Rịa. Service journalier de voitures publics (correspondence - colis postaux - voyageurs). Marché de gré à gré. (adjudication : un indien) 1898-1899; VNA2 IA.20/244(3) Voitures Publics Saigon- Tay Ninh, Saigon - Trang Bang. Service correspondance et voyageurs. Marché de gré à gré avec M. Fabule et sieur Pajaniappatevanc en vue d'assurer le même service. 1890-1897; VNA2 IA20 244 (8) Voitures Publics Biên Hoà- Long Thanh. Marché de gré à gré...Actes de substitution au nom de Sepakyry Mahamed entrepreneur 1900-1906; VNA2 IA.20/252 Voitures Publics Service de voitures publics pour le transports des voyageurs et de la poste entre Saigon-Tay Ninh, Saigon-Biên Hoà - marché de gré à gré avec M. Trigaut, concurrence avec M. Pajaniatevane (Saigon - Tay Ninh et vice-versa), 1898-1899.

relevant. At least three expatriate Indians were 'proprietors of transport autos' in 1936, but it is not possible to know whether there was any link between these Indians running automated cars and the Tamils of the previous century driving horse carriages and bullock carts.²⁹⁷

From the beginning of the French colonial presence in Cochinchina, a demand for milk and dairy products created by the European presence was filled by Tamils who tended cattle and sold milk door-to-door. In 1884, when a list of 'merchants of milk' (*marchands de lait*) began to be included in the commercial section of the colonial yearbook, it consisted of no less than twenty-six Tamil names in Saigon, and seven in Cholon. The great majority, again, were probably caste Hindus. One or two Muslims also supplied milk in Saigon and Phnom Penh in the 1880s.²⁹⁸

Tamils supplied milk door-to-door, but also filled contracts to supply fresh milk, mainly to government hospitals. They continued to produce and sell milk in Cochinchina throughout the French colonial period (a woman from a renouncer family who grew up in Saigon and Phnom Penh just prior to the Second World War recalled Tamils bringing milk to her family home in both places).²⁹⁹ From the 1930s, however, most Tamil milkmen 'could barely make ends meet'.³⁰⁰ From the early twentieth century they lost much of their metropolitan clientele to European competition and a preference for hygienic packaging and pasteurisation. A 1905 report on milk in Indochina stated that fresh milk was produced mainly for military hospitals, by 'Indians and Annamites' who kept herds of cows. It noted that fresh milk was not part of the indigenous diet. By contrast, 'Condensed milk, sweetened or plain, sold in small tins, and fresh pasteurised milk displayed in shops in tins and bottles are more widely consumed, due to their modest price and their easier conservation'.³⁰¹ Not long afterwards, the scores of Tamil milkmen listed in the commercial pages of the colonial yearbook disappeared, replaced

²⁹⁷ VNA1 L1 1. Non-reconnaissance du droit de l'éligibilité des indiens sujets français aux chambres de commerce, 1938. 'État numérique des Indiens sujets français non-renonçants établis en Cochinchine, 1936'.

²⁹⁸ *Annuaire 1884*, pp. 386, 392; 'Relevée des actes de renonciation', *JOEFI 1898*, p. 400.

²⁹⁹ Interview Mrs. Julianne Paul Ambroise, Pondicherry, 31 October 2004.

³⁰⁰ 'Taper sur les pauvres hindous est si facile!', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 6 December 1931.

³⁰¹ VNA1 L.413423 Renseignements sur l'importation et la production du lait en Indochine, 1902-1906.

by a single name: 'Nestlé and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co., 19 Mac Mahon Street.'³⁰² Around the same time, some French milk companies were employing aggressive advertising in attempts to wrest those Vietnamese who had developed a taste for dairy products from the grip of the Tamil milk merchants (see Plate 7).

The decline of Tamil livestock-related services appears to have led to the virtual disappearance of Indian carters and carriage drivers. Although Tamil milkmen continued to operate in Cochinchina throughout the colonial period, they were an increasingly impoverished class of migrants whose trade was no longer lucrative. However, among those who managed the livestock services and supplies under government contracts were men who met with considerable financial success, as a view of their money lending and landowning activities will attest.

Tax farms and government tenders

Revenue farms or tax farms were arrangements whereby private bidders won the right to collect taxes from the public for specific services in return for a lump sum payment from government. Prevalent elsewhere in South East Asia in the late nineteenth century, they have been described as transitional institutions which sowed the seeds of their own dissolution by helping to finance modern state-run bureaucracies.³⁰³ Many types of revenue farm persisted in Cochinchina, however, well into the twentieth century. The farming of market, ferry and moorings taxes in the colony was managed by Tamils from the 1870s right up until the end of colonial rule. As I have mentioned, Tamils were also involved in a number of different types of supply contracts to government many of which, unlike the tax farms, were short-lived.

The first Tamils known to be involved in market tax farming in Cochinchina were a presumed Hindu, Souprayapoullé, and a Catholic renouncer, Samy Appassamy. Souprayapoullé was listed in the Colonial Yearbook for 1876 as a '[tax] farmer of the

³⁰² *Les addresses 1913*, p. 261.

³⁰³ John Butcher and Howard Dick, eds. *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming*, Houndswills: St Martin's Press, 1993, p. 3.

central market'.³⁰⁴ Samy Appassamy became involved in the tax farming of Cholon markets at a later date (in the late 1880s or 1890s). A Franco-Tamil newspaper claimed he developed the Cholon revenue farms when they 'did not exist at the time'.³⁰⁵

Tamils were especially active in the Mekong Delta in the management of market taxes, and they went on to carve out similar niches in the tendering of charges for ferry services and (less frequently), mooring and loading along quays. While these areas of revenue farming remained securely Tamil, they quickly became Muslim niches of operation. There were good reasons for this. All three types of tax farm were well-suited to the merchants, with their shops located in towns throughout the Mekong Delta. The latter activities were particularly relevant to the waterways criss-crossing the Delta. From the late nineteenth century it was South Indian Muslims who routinely won bids to farm taxes in Mekong Delta towns and districts.³⁰⁶ Other areas of revenue farming in which Tamils (but not always Muslims) occasionally became involved were tax farms on slaughterhouses, and taxes on rubbish collection in towns and cities.³⁰⁷

Tamils also filled contracts for various supplies and services to government. The network of Tamils associated with livestock raising were associated with many of these contracts. They provided transport and labour for early French urban construction projects and for the development of public transport links in colonial Cochinchina. These contracts, such as the one Tirouvingadame signed in 1869 to furnish bullock carts to the Civil Works department, are testimony to the Tamils role in constructing Saigon as a colonial city and developing communication links with the provinces.³⁰⁸ These livestock-related contracts extended to the provision of animal feed and milk.³⁰⁹ Tamils serviced a

³⁰⁴ *ACCH* 1876, p. 137.

³⁰⁵ 'Depart de M Samy Appassamy', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 13-16 July 1933.

³⁰⁶ See *AGI* 1908, pp. 342-345.

³⁰⁷ VNA2 IA.9/243(9) Trésor – Demande de main-levée d'opposition sur les mandats des paiements de patentes de M. Madjagabalanchetty, fermier des abattoirs de Saigon, fournisseur de bois de chauffage du Service Local et fermier des marchés de Dakao et de Nam Chon, 1895; VNA2 GD2995: 'Notice sur le sieur Mouhammed Aboubakare'.

³⁰⁸ See VNA2 CP7979; VNA2 CP8042; VNA2 CP8005; VNA2 IA.20/186(10); VNA2 IA.20/224(4); VNA2 IA.20/244(3); VNA2 IA.20 244 (8); VNA2 IA.20/252.

³⁰⁹ VNA2 CP8111 Marché de gré à gré avec le sieur NARAYANIN pour la fourniture du paddy nécessaire à la nourriture des bœufs...7 décembre, 1878; VNA2 CP8143 Hôpitaux : Cahier des charges pour la fourniture du lait pendant l'année 1880.

variety of other contracts too, including supplying wood for heating to local administrations, and food to prisoners and college students.³¹⁰

Prior to the introduction of electricity in the two cities, two renouncers played important roles in providing lighting to Saigon and Cholon. In the 1900s, Appassamy Samy was occupied with contracts to provide petrol lighting to public buildings in both cities.³¹¹ Xavier de Condappa, presumably taking over from Samy, undertook petrol lighting for the city of Saigon from 1908 -1911.³¹² Both men had professional training, the first medical and the second legal, and both been previously employed in the administration, Samy as a health officer (*officier de la santé*) in the 1880s, and de Condappa as legal clerk around the turn of the twentieth century.³¹³ They are typical of renounced Indians who could not use their professional training to its fullest extent in Cochinchina, and instead pursued other avenues. We can surmise that men such as Samy and de Condappa benefited from connections established while in the administration, however, to advance their success as contractors to government.

Although Tamils continued to maintain control of certain types of market tax farming throughout the period of French colonial rule, their involvement was subject foremost to competition from the Chinese, who were also widely involved in revenue farms. Robequain, writing in 1944, made mention of Chinese collecting taxes in the markets and feeding prisoners (roles he described as 'too distasteful for Europeans').³¹⁴ Diminished Tamil involvement in supply contracts to government, which can be observed after the 1900s, was probably to some extent a result of Chinese competition. Chinese were listed as bidders alongside Tamils on many tenders from the late nineteenth century. However, technological change no doubt played a role too, in the decline of

³¹⁰ VNA2 IA.9/243(9); VNA2 IA.9/292(12) Marchés et adjudications - Fournitures des ratios de mires nécessaires à la nourriture des élèves du Collège de Mỹ Tho. Marché Oussanessaheb, 1905; VNA2 GD2995: 'Notice sur le sieur Mouhammed Aboubakare'.

³¹¹ 'Depart de M Samy Appassamy', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 13-16 July 1933; and VNA2 IA.9/292(6) Marchés adjudications - Eclairage au pétrole des batiments du service locale : marché Samy Appassainy [sic] (cahier des charges), 1905-1907.

³¹² 'Un grand philanthrope hindou: M. Xavier de Condappa', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 February 1931.

³¹³ 'Depart de M Samy Appassamy', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 13-16 July 1933; 'Un grand philanthrope hindou: M. Xavier de Condappa', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 February 1931.

³¹⁴ Robequain, *Economic Development*, p. 38.

livestock-related contracts as much as in contracts for gas lighting with the introduction of electricity.

Urban and rural land investments

The Chinese were the largest foreign landowners in Cochinchina by a long measure, but Indians came a respectable second. 1921 figures on 'foreign land ownership in Cochinchina', at the beginning of the building boom in Saigon and Cholon, showed the Chinese held some twenty million piastres worth of land, against 1.7 million held by the much smaller Indian population. This gave the Indians a larger-than-proportional share, especially of the urban land market.³¹⁵ The count of 'foreign owners' presumably excluded Indians from the French possessions, meaning the true figure would have been somewhat higher.

The biggest groups of Indian landowners in the colony were undoubtedly the Nattukkottai Chettiars. The value of all Chettiar-held property prior to the economic crisis of 1929-1930 was 2,045,000 piastres (at 1937 values).³¹⁶ Generally averse to owning and managing rural land, the Chettiars actively invested from the early decades of their arrival in the colony in urban properties.³¹⁷ In the late 1920s, individual Chettiars' annual incomes from property averaged from 60,000 to 100,000 piastres.³¹⁸ Further rental income (3,000 piastres monthly) came from rental properties belonging to the temple fund, in collective Chettiar possession.³¹⁹ It was not until the onset of the Depression that Nattukkottai Chettiars came into possession, through debt foreclosure, of vast tracts of agricultural land. Their gains in this time amounted to 30,000 hectares of land, worth 3,300,000 piastres. Seventy-three percent of the area they possessed was Transbassac paddy land.³²⁰

³¹⁵ ANOM GGI60909 Renseignements fournis au Département au sujet propriété foncière : droit des étrangers 1921.

³¹⁶ VNA2 GD2992: *Directeur des Services des prêts fonciers à longue terme* to Director Finance Indochina, 29 September 1937.

³¹⁷ Interview A.M.A. Meyapachettiar, Karaikudi, 28 September 2004; See also VNA2 GD2992: lists of 'properties held by Chettys'.

³¹⁸ ANOM GGI65475: *Rapport Annuel 1924-25*, and *rapport annuel 1er juillet 1926 à 1er juillet 1927*, Les Indiens.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ VNA2 GD2992: *Directeur des Services des prêts fonciers à longue terme* to Director Finance Indochina, 29 September 1937.

The single most wealthy Indian landowner between the wars was not a Chettiar, however, but J.M.M. Ishmael, the Saigon-based South Indian Muslim merchant. Property acquired by Ishmael in the interwar years, in partnership with his brother Mohamed Abdoullah, consisted by 1933 of blocks of compartments, commercial properties and empty lots on ten different streets in central Saigon. It was evaluated at 891,000 piastres with an annual income of 111,328 piastres.³²¹ A descendant has claimed that at its height the family's property empire was second only to that of the Chinese Hui Bon Hoa, the largest landowner in Saigon. This view went unchallenged in interviews with older Tamils in Pondicherry, who still remember the Ishmael brothers as legendary figures with legendary fortunes.³²² Other South Indian Muslim merchants also acquired properties between the wars, although their holdings and incomes were somewhat more modest than those of the Ishmael brothers.³²³

Although Chettiar and Muslim landholdings were impressive, a few renounced Indians could also hold their own in this field. Some were men who arrived in Cochinchina in the late nineteenth century and benefited (probably much like the Chettiars) from buying urban land before Saigon and Cholon's colonial development got underway in earnest. Some of these men, employed in the administration in the Offices of Public Works or Land Registration, undoubtedly acted on information obtained in their places of work. Examples of Indian French citizens who acquired significant land holdings include registration-office clerk turned banker Ra-Soccalingam, and Rattinam Sinnas, who arrived in Saigon in 1889 and was employed shortly thereafter by the Office of Public Works. According to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all raised in Saigon or Hanoi but now living in Pondicherry, he purchased land cheaply in the area which then became developed as the Central Market (now Bến Thành). Rattinam's son, Evariste, constructed the popular Chinese-style shopfront housing on this land in the 1920s. The family maintains today that a Sinnas alley (*ruelle Sinnas*) gave access to this

³²¹ VNA2 GD2995: 'Notice sur les sieurs J.M. Mohamed Ishmael et J.M. Mohamed Abdoullah.'

³²² Interviews Mrs. Mumtaz Alam, Saigon, January 1997; Mr. Abdoul-Gaffour, 9 January 2002 and 2 September 2004, and members of Said family, 20 November 2004.

³²³ See ANOM GGI65476: Action Indienne.

housing.³²⁴ Evariste Sinnas' entry into the world of business is yet another example of how certain ambitious renouncers shunned the security of employment in the colonial administration. As a young recruit posted in 1927 to the forestry service in Kampung Thom (Cambodia), he declared upon quitting (days after beginning work in the remote village) that he was 'sufficiently wealthy to have no need to bow down before the drudgery of making his living as a functionary'.³²⁵

The entrepreneur Xavier de Condappa also acquired considerable land holdings in Cholon either during or shortly after the First World War. A Sinnas descendant recounted:

In Cholon it was de Condappa...If his name was on the map of Saigon, it was because he had even more *compartiments* than my grandfather. There was a boulevard Xavier de Condappa in Cholon...³²⁶

I have been unable to verify the claim that one of Cholon's boulevards at one time carried the name of a renouncer, but it is not entirely unlikely. An article in the Franco-Tamil *Saigon-Dimanche* outlining de Condappa's achievements stated that in 1928 he donated large tracts of land in Cholon to the municipality to develop a market and widen roads.³²⁷ It is possible that one of these avenues was then given his name.

Another renouncer whose fortunes took off during the building boom of the 1920s was the contractor Samy Appassamy. He is said to have entered into construction at a time when Saigon 'was growing like a mushroom'.³²⁸ Savéricom Prouchandy was yet another big landowner whose land holdings in the late 1920s included compartments and vacant lots in both Saigon and Cap St Jacques (Vũng Tàu). Savéricom's nephew, Léon Prouchandy went on to himself become a property owner and entrepreneur of some note.³²⁹

³²⁴ Interviews Alfred Sinnas, Pondicherry, 10 October 2004, and Maurice Sinnas, Pondicherry, 7 October 2004.

³²⁵ NAC 13468 Dossier Personnel Evariste Louis Sinnas, agent journalier 1921-1927.

³²⁶ Interview Alfred Sinnas, Pondicherry, 10 October 2004.

³²⁷ 'Un grand philanthrope hindou: M. Xavier de Condappa', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 February 1931.

³²⁸ *Saigon-Dimanche*, 13-16 July 1933. 'Depart de M Samy Appassamy'.

³²⁹ Interview with a descendant, Paris April 2004.

Some caste Hindus involved in the livestock networks also amassed significant land holdings in Cochinchina. The entrepreneur Nagalingapoullé owned a large lot bordering the Chettiar temple on Ohier Street in 1881.³³⁰ By the late 1920s, the holdings of the milk merchant Palamiappadevar (alternately Pajaniappathévar) were large enough to be of note to the Security Bureau (a monthly rental income of 6,000 piastres).³³¹ So too was the property owned by Kathiappadevar or Katthéappathévar, (2,500 piastres monthly), who by the 1930s was a well-known personality in Saigon's Tamil expatriate circle, noted in the Franco-Tamil newspaper *Indochine-Inde* for his philanthropy and his 'exquisite urbanity, cordiality and amiability'.³³² In addition to this the 1937 Chettiar banking enquiry listed the property holdings of several Indian moneylenders who were not properly 'Chettys'. Most remarkable among them was Appapoullé, who acquired massive tracts of land in Gia Định and Gò Vấp provinces following the economic crisis, apparently through mortgages extended directly to him.³³³ Others included Nadimouttoupoullé and Varadappoulé, listed as co-owners of a tract, that had been 'bequeathed by Pajaniappathévar in his will of 4 November, 1922', a fact which connects them to the former milk merchant and the Hindu livestock networks.³³⁴

Aside from urban properties, some Indians are known to have taken agricultural land concessions in rural areas. We can assume, from the policy of reserving such lands for French citizens, that the landowners in question were all renouncers.³³⁵ According to notary records, renounced Indians who held concessions in the 1900s included Andoninadin Guanadicom (Bạc Liêu, Bà Rịa), P.I. Tetta (Bà Rịa), and Marie-Joseph Ponnou (Châu Đốc and Long Xuyên).³³⁶ Mr. Moultou was known in the 1930s as 'a well known colonist (*colon*) from Mỹ Tho', where he kept paddy fields and coconut groves, and at least one South Indian Muslim, presumably one of the few of his faith who renounced, was a 'colonist and entrepreneur', in Châu Đốc in 1926.³³⁷

³³⁰ VNA2 CP8372.

³³¹ ANOM GGI65476: Action Indienne.

³³² Ibid.; 'Le départ de M. Katthéappathévar', *Indochine-Inde*, 2 and 9 May 1937.

³³³ VNA2 GD2992: 'Province de Gia Dinh, Liste des biens immeubles des chettys'.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 11-14.

³³⁶ CARAN SOM NOT Indochine SOM/02.

³³⁷ 'Le retour de M. Moultou', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 27 April 1930; ANOM GGI65475: rapport annuel 1er juillet 1926 à 1er juillet 1927, Les Indiens.

Although the request was ultimately refused, one Tamil bid for a land concession is particularly interesting for what it reveals of overseas Tamil interdependence in Cochinchina, and in this case, beyond its borders into the French protectorate of Cambodia. Henri Djeganadin Saint-Jacques was a renounced Indian, a legal clerk and Justice of the Peace in Saigon when he applied in 1926 for a land concession in Soai Rieng on the Cambodian-Cochinchinese border (see Plate 8). Obligated to demonstrate his financial resources as part of his application, he enclosed a deed from the bank of Indochina indicating his deposit there (55,800 piastres) as well as proof of two other deposits (worth a total of 5,500 piastres) held with Tamil bankers. The deeds they provided (*obligation souscrite*) show that Saint-Jacques had a fixed-term deposit with Si-Mou-Ta-Candassamy ('banquier Indien, 20, rue Ohier') of 4,000 piastres, and a demand deposit with Sa-Covindassamy of 1,500 piastres (both at one percent monthly interest for three months).³³⁸ Neither bankers appears to have been a member of the Nattukottai Chettiar caste or banking network. The first was most likely the Candassamy whose bankruptcy would spark drama a few years' later. A further detail revealing the interconnections between different Tamil migrants is Saint-Jacques' appointment of a M. Mougamadou, no doubt a Tamil Muslim trader in the local area, as his representative in Soai Rieng while his application was being processed.³³⁹

The Chettiars were criticised the most loudly for taking money out of Cochinchina to invest in India, but all groups of Tamil migrants did so, on scales both large and small. This is evidenced, if not fully quantified, by the many examples of land investments in India that were financed by gains from Cochinchina. The renouncer Xavier de Condappa began to acquire and develop agricultural land in Tavalacoupam (Pondicherry), in the 1900s, around the same time he was investing in urban land in

³³⁸ NAC 4331 Demande de Concession 800Ha formulée par M. Saint-Jacques. 1926-1928 : 'Traduction de l'obligation souscrite au recto en caractères tamouls par le sieur Si-Mou-Ta-Candassamy, banquier indien, demeurant à Saigon, rue Ohier, No.20, au profit de M. D. Saint-Jacques.' And in the same file, 'Traduction de l'obligation souscrite à la page précédante...en caractères tamouls par le sieur Sa Covindassamy, banquier indien, demeurant à Saigon, rue Ohier, No.9, au profit de M. D. Saint-Jacques.'

³³⁹ NAC 4331: Saint-Jacques to French resident, Soai Rieng, 31 July, 1926.

Cholon. He also bought urban property in Pondicherry.³⁴⁰ J.M.M. Ishmael, too, made significant land investments in India.³⁴¹ Similarly, Savéricom Prouchandy purchased at auction between the wars one of the grandest houses in Pondicherry, the Villa Aroumé.³⁴² Other descendants of Tamils resident in Cochinchina have repeatedly claimed that family properties now held in Pondicherry (or sometimes since sold) were purchased by their forebears with capital brought back from Cochinchina, or Indochina.

Purveyors to Saigon's expatriates

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a preponderance of bars, 'public houses', cafés and small drinks shops (*débit de boissons*, *cabarets*, *cafés* and *buvettes*) in Saigon were run by Tamils. Some of these enterprises appear to have been based on European models, their owners, like the vendors of milk, capitalising on demands created by the French presence, and the presence of French tastes.

We know of at least three renouncers who ran establishments in Saigon serving drink to French clients in the late 1800s. Rangassamy-Naiker (known as Casimir upon his renunciation) served a French clientele at his bar on Catinat street from the late 1860s or early 1870s.³⁴³ The proprietor of the *Café des Messageries Maritimes* in the 1880s, Ayassamy Beaumont, was also a renouncer.³⁴⁴ The wife of Darmanden Prouchandy owned a drinks shop in the 1890s. The story of her husband's singular attempt to compete directly with European business interests by running a steamboat service in the Mekong Delta is recounted in Appendix II. She and Darmanaden invested further in the potential market for European drink by founding a plant in the 1890s to produce carbonated drinks and lemonade.³⁴⁵ Robequain has noted that both products, along with ice cream and beer,

³⁴⁰ 'Un grand philanthrope hindou: M. Xavier de Condappa', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 February 1931; Discussion Raj de Condappa, Pondicherry, September 2004.

³⁴¹ VNA2 GD2995: 'Notice sur les sieurs J.M. Mohamed Ismael et J.M. Mohamed Abdoullah.'

³⁴² Interview with a descendant, Paris, April 2004.

³⁴³ VNA2 CP8768 (1) Séance 2-12-1872 Réclamation Sieur Rangassamy quant à l'impôt de capitation: Rangassamy to Governor CCH, 23 September 1872.

³⁴⁴ *ACCH 1889*, p. 488.

³⁴⁵ ANOM GGI8644 Demande formulée par Mme Veuve [sic] Prouchandy tendant à obtenir l'interdiction de l'importation des lemonades gazeuses originaires de Singapore 1902.

'were created in the first place for a European clientele.'³⁴⁶ As French authorities observed of the Prouchandy's operation: '[it] appears to prosper and has made [them] relatively well-off'.³⁴⁷ However, Darmanaden's 1902 request to the Governor General of Indochina to prohibit the import of 'lemonades', which fell on deaf ears, suggests that his enterprise, like that of the Tamil milkmen, became weakened by imports.³⁴⁸

During the same period, other Tamil-run drinks shops and various small-scale services were located in areas of Saigon where Tamils were concentrated, suggesting their primary customers were Tamils. In 1889 Samdapoullé ran a shop serving drinks (*buvette*) in Batavia street, which probably served the Tamil milk merchants with whom the street was then associated.³⁴⁹ The yearbook of 1891 noted another Tamil drinks stall, that of a Mme Coupamalle, on the same street. In the same period Zeinabou and Sandjivinadivi-Ajaguianadin ran *buvettes* in Adran and Ohier streets respectively, both streets by then dominated by Chettiars.³⁵⁰

Mouttou, who had by 1912 set up shop on Ohier street to sell spices, no doubt centred his business in the midst of his best customers. With other Tamil businesses we can only speculate who their customers were. It is difficult now to know to whom Ayassamy (proprietor of the 'Ayassamy Patisserie' on Chaigneau Street circa 1908) or Annamalechetty, a 'fixed-post merchant of sweets' (*'marchand de bon bons à poste fixe'*) in 1912, served their treats.³⁵¹

Between the wars, there was a rise in the number of small-scale Tamil businesses in Saigon catering more obviously and more directly to a Tamil clientele. This decline of Tamils providing 'French' services and the increase in services directed at Tamils could be explained by competition which pushed Tamils out of niches which they earlier filled in the absence both of small-scale European entrepreneurs in Cochinchina, and of organised channels of import. It was also, no doubt, due to the growth in the Tamil and

³⁴⁶ Robequain, *Economic Development*, p. 279.

³⁴⁷ VNA2 SL4577 Demande de réhabilitation formulée par M. Prouchandy (Darmanaden), demeurant à Saigon 1905

³⁴⁸ ANOM GGI8644.

³⁴⁹ *ACCH 1889*, p. 402.

³⁵⁰ *AGI 1891*, p. 412

³⁵¹ *AGI 1908*, p. 470; *AGI 1912*, p. 398.

the wider Indian population in Saigon, which made it worthwhile to cater to an Indian clientele.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Saigon-based businesses catering to Tamil expatriates included importers of Indian spices and providers of specially prepared Tamil foodstuffs. Nadarassin, on the rue d'Espagne, was one dry goods merchant (*épicier*) whose products were sought after by Tamil expatriates in this period.³⁵² Tamils located in the outskirts of Saigon pressed sesame and peanut oil and prepared rice and tamarind by Tamil methods to supply the Indian expatriate community. These services were certainly in place by the 1930s, but likely began earlier. Postcards, probably from the 1910s, show bullock-driven Tamil oil presses in Cochinchina (see Plate 9). One Pondicherrian woman who grew up in Saigon in the 1930s can recall how her family continued, after a move to Phnom Penh in the early 1940s, to have all three products sent by bus to Cambodia, until wartime conditions made it no longer possible.³⁵³

Between the World Wars, as in the previous decades, many small Tamil enterprises were located in streets where Tamils were concentrated in Saigon. Lagrandière street in particular, which by the First World War had come to be the preferred place of residence of many Indians employed in the administration, attracted importers of Tamil foodstuffs and restaurants serving Indian food. In the early 1930s *Au Comptoir Hindou* at 132 LaGrandière was a supplier of 'Garouda curry powders' and arrack ('as good as Gin, Cognac and other spirits. Ask for it at the *Comptoir Hindou*...sole agent in Indochina').³⁵⁴

Teachers of Tamil children

Before the 1930s, most Tamil children in Cochinchina were the offspring of renouncers. As French citizens, renouncer children were entitled to attend schools reserved for those children classed as 'Europeans'. Yet while their parents were capable

³⁵² Interview Mrs. Amélie Marius Le Prince, Pondicherry, 11 November 2004; see also VNA1 Goucoch III59/N44(11) Authorisation d'exportation de Pondichéry d'un produit alimentaire dénommé 'mantèque' sollicitée par l'épicier Nadarassin 1939.

³⁵³ Interview Mrs. Amélie Le Prince, Pondicherry, 11 November 2004.

³⁵⁴ *Saigon-Dimanche*, 9 October 1932; *Saigon-Dimanche*, 12 March 1933.

of stridently and publicly embracing French values, (as the two following chapters will amply demonstrate) and could (at least as higher and middle ranking functionaries) adopt lifestyles which attempted to mirror those of their European colonial counterparts, the 'Tamil-ness' of many aspects of renouncers lives remained important to them. Renouncers in Saigon were willing to give their daughters a basic education in French, but preferred them to be schooled among other girls, and preferably among other Indians. Also, renouncers' mother tongue remained important enough for them to seek formal Tamil education for all of their children.

The several attempts to establish Franco-Tamil schools in Saigon all grew from desires on the part of renouncer parents to have both a degree of Tamil-language schooling for their children and a segregated primary education for their daughters. The *Akkapalykoodam* or 'School of the sister-in-law' was a nursery exclusively for Tamil children established on Lagrandière street around 1915. It was run by the Lefort sisters of Pondicherry. According to a descendant, the sisters had already begun an informal nursery, caring for Tamil children while their mothers shopped at nearby Bến Thành market, when they were encouraged by a catholic priest to start a formal Tamil language nursery. The school was affiliated with the catholic church and run from premises belonging to the church; Indians who attended the school in the 1930s recall being taught the catechism. The Lefort sisters continued to teach Tamil to the children of overseas Indians for the next thirty years.³⁵⁵

The first Tamil primary school in Saigon was founded a few years before the nursery, in 1907 when a Mrs. Pochont requested to establish a 'school especially for young Indian girls'. She claimed the idea 'was suggested to me by the Indians who desire the creation of a school for girls and reserved solely for their children... Most Indian families in Saigon know me and I speak their language fluently.'³⁵⁶ French officials objected to its opening on the grounds that that it did 'not appear to be an absolute

³⁵⁵ Interview Ms. Lefort, Pondicherry, 19 November 2004; Interview Dr. Claude Marius, Pondicherry, 25 November 2004.

³⁵⁶ VNA2 IA.6/244(6) Instruction Publiques...Demande de création d'une école indienne à Saigon présenté par Mme Vve Pochont, 1907 : Mrs. Pochont to Director Public Education, 2 December 1907.

necessity'. 'As the Indians are nearly all French citizens', they pointed out, 'their daughters are allowed to attend the *Institution des jeunes filles*.' This was a free secular school itself founded by a Pondicherry *créole*, Miss Isidore, some years earlier.³⁵⁷ Nonetheless, colonial authorities permitted Mrs. Pochont to open her school. She did so without public subsidies because, as she indicated to the French authorities, 'Indian bankers' were willing 'to participate towards the costs of the school...and even to cover the costs of the first instalment'.³⁵⁸ Whether it was Nattukottai Chettiars, or other non-Chettiar bankers who had backed her project we do not know.

The *École Mannapin*, (or 'Franco-Indian school') which is first mentioned in 1910, may have Mrs. Pochont's school under a new name, as her venture receives no mention after this date. It may also by this date have attracted new patrons. In a press tribute to Xavier de Condappa in 1931, his contribution around this date to efforts to found a 'private school' to encourage 'young *hindoue* girls to study and receive instruction in French' is mentioned.³⁵⁹ From archival documents and interviews with Pondicherrians who attended the school in the late 1930s, we know that it was a primary school which taught Tamil and French to Tamil children and was reserved for girls, or at least segregated them from the boys.³⁶⁰ The Franco-Indian primary school moved in the 1930s to a location opposite the *Akkapalykoodam* Tamil nursery on Lagrandière street, where so many renouncers made their residence.³⁶¹

The teachers and headmistresses of Saigon's small Tamil schools were exclusively women, and were either Indo-French or renouncers. Virtually all of them

³⁵⁷ VNA2 IA.6/244(6): Director Public education to unidentified correspondent, 18 December 1907 : on the *Institution des jeunes filles* see VNA2 IA.6/244(4) Instruction Publique: Demande de Mlle Isidore, Marie, d'ouvrir une école, 1900; VNA2 IA.7/234(4) Ecoles privées...subvention accordée à Mlle ISIDOU [sic], institutrice libre à Saigon 1904-1907; VNA2 IIA.8/111(19) Subventions accordées à Mlle Marie ISIDORE pour le fonctionnement de son école privée sise rue Mac Mahon 1925-1926.

³⁵⁸ VNA2 IA.6/244(6) Instruction Publiques...Demande de création d'une école indienne à Saigon présenté par Mme Vve Pochont, 1907 : Director Public education to unidentified party, 18 December 1907.

³⁵⁹ 'Un grand philanthrope hindou: M. Xavier de Condappa', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 February 1931.

³⁶⁰ VNA2 IIA.8/111(21) Subventions accordées à Mme Simon-Jean (ex-veuve MANNAPIN) pour le fonctionnement de son école libre Franco-Indienne 1910-1932; VNA2 IIA.8/121(18) Demande de remboursement des frais de réparation locatives effectués à l'école Franco-Indienne par M. Benjamin Sinnassamy 1938-1939; Interview Dr. Claude Marius, Pondicherry, 25 November 2004; Interview Henri Isidore and family, Madras, 17 October, 2004; Interview Ms. Lefort, Pondicherry, 19 November 2004.

³⁶¹ 'Donnons un nom à nos écoles', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 8 January 1932.

were forced into employment through the inability of a husband or father to provide for the family. The renouncer Lefort sisters had been called out to join their brothers, all three employed in Saigon, following the death of their father in India.³⁶² The husband of Mrs. Pochont had very recently died, judging by the black borders on her correspondence. Frequently referred to as the 'Widow Pochont', hers is an Indo-French surname. The headmistress of the *Ecole Mannapin* was a renouncer and a widow (the Widow Mannapin, who remarried to become Mrs. Simon-Jean). That school was later run by a *créole* from French India, Mrs. Hécquet.³⁶³

Indians who attended the Tamil nursery in the 1930s recall that it attracted not only Catholics (and by implication, renouncers) but that they also had classmates who were of other faiths.³⁶⁴ This reflects the fact that by the 1930s the families of renouncers, by this time long settled in Cochinchina, had begun to be joined by the families of other Tamil migrant networks. Prior to the 1930s, very few Muslim or Chettiar women accompanied their men-folk to Cochinchina, although it was not unusual for young boys, both Muslim and Chettiar, to join their fathers overseas while their mothers remained in India.³⁶⁵ By the 1930s there was also a growing community of Indo-Vietnamese, mainly the offspring of unions between local women and South Indian Muslim migrants.³⁶⁶

Conclusion

Tamil migrants to Cochinchina developed several occupational specialisations during their stay in the colony. The main groups were renouncers employed in the colonial administration, South Indian Muslims in textile and other trades, Nattukottai

³⁶² Interview Ms. Lefort, Pondicherry, 19 November 2004.

³⁶³ VNA2 IIA.8/111(21); VNA2 IIA.8/121(18); Interview Dr. Claude Marius, Pondicherry, 25 November 2004; Interview Henri Isidore, Madras, 17 October, 2004; Interview Mrs. Amélie Marius Le Prince, Pondicherry, 11 November 2004.

³⁶⁴ Interview Dr. Claude Marius, Pondicherry, 25 November 2004; Interview Mrs. Amélie Marius Le Prince, Pondicherry, 11 November 2004; Interview Ms. Lefort, Pondicherry, 19 November 2004.

³⁶⁵ Interviews Mr. Abdoul-Gaffour, 9 January 2002 and 2 September 2004; Interview R.M. Krishnanchettiar, Tiruchchirapalli, 27 September 2004; VNA2 GD 2994 Demande de capacité juridique presenter par l'Association Indochinoise de Nattukottai Chettiars 1940: Annual report of Indochinese Association of Nattukottai Chettiars, 2 February 1939; Discussion Mr. Abdul Latif, HCMC, April 2005.

³⁶⁶ P. Huard 'Introduction à l'étude des Eurasiens', *Bulletin Économique de l'Indochine*, 1939, 715-758, (p. 752).

Chettiars in banking, and certain other Hindus in livestock rearing, transport and the provision of milk. Despite these norms, there was scope for Tamils to enter into fields that were apparently the preserve of other compatriots. Most notably, some ambitious renouncers eschewed their accepted employment as colonial functionaries and undertook business ventures. When they did so these ventures were almost always characteristically Tamil.

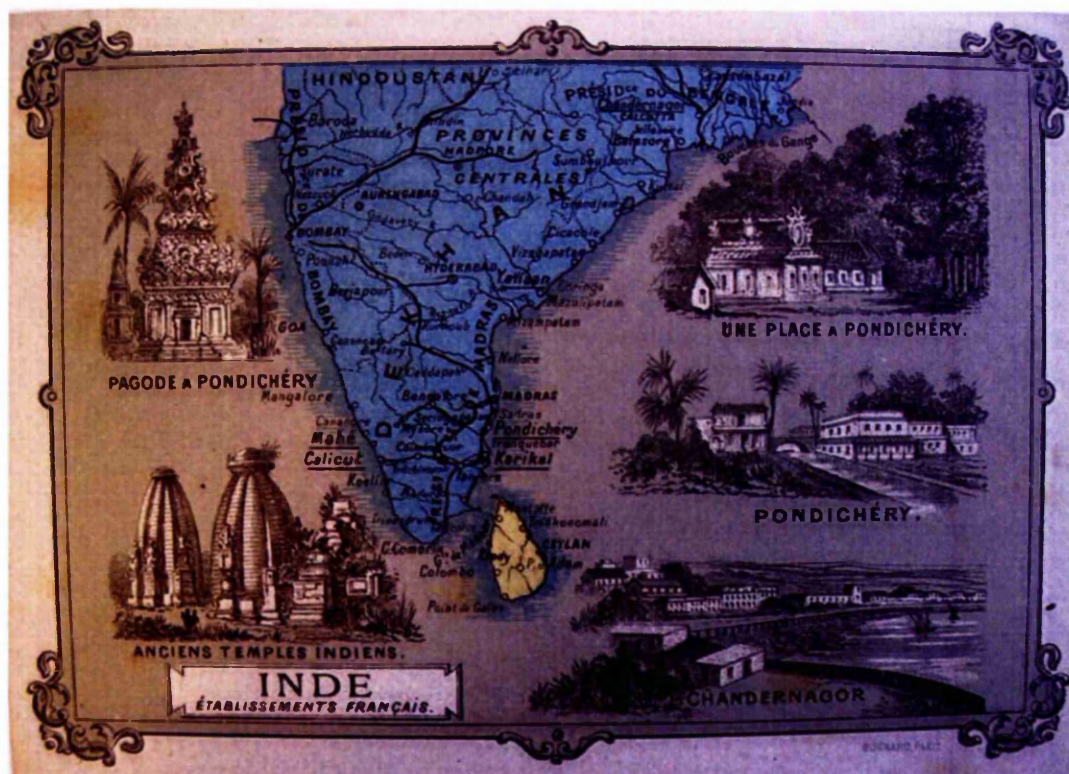
There were also many everyday ties between renouncers and the wider overseas Tamil population. Even when they were not directly engaged in 'Tamil' commerce, renouncers were involved in various ways in Tamil commercial networks. Renouncer functionaries assisted other Tamils in negotiating their way through the French colonial bureaucracy. They facilitated the conduct of Tamil business in Cochinchina because of their positioning in key areas of the administration (immigration, customs and excise, public works, the legal system). They shared a language and cultural references with the Indian entrepreneurs, and at the same time understood the workings of the French system. Their presence within the administration was therefore important to other Tamils who operated at a greater distance from French power. But this assistance was reciprocated too, as renouncers are also known to have sought the assistance, for example, of Tamils in the interior of Cochinchina to further their own business interests. This sense of a Tamil community also developed as Tamil-run services which aimed to cater to European tastes declined (succumbing to competition as the European settler population became better established), and services began to develop which catered specifically to the tastes and preferences of a growing Tamil population. While it is legitimate to speak of segmented migrant groups with different backgrounds and separate interests, there are also grounds for seeing Tamil migrants in Cochinchina as a coherent group, unified in the many small but significant ways outlined in this chapter.

Renouncers were very much part of this Tamil world. And yet, in the bureaucratic, policing and security positions in which they were employed by the French state, to the peoples of Cochinchina they very visibly represented the face of French power and authority. Moreover, as I will demonstrate in the two following chapters by

examining debates over renouncers' political and civil rights in Cochinchina, they could very self-consciously claim their French-ness. These two hats they wore, and the complex network of ties between different Tamil migrants are no doubt one reason why outside observers have seldom been able to clearly portray who in the overseas Indian community was who. Renouncers' ability to be mistaken for other Indian migrants, and their own ambiguous existence as both French and Tamil, are important again when I later examine the Vietnamese reaction to the renouncer presence, and renouncers' efforts to raise their public profile in Cochinchina in the interwar years.

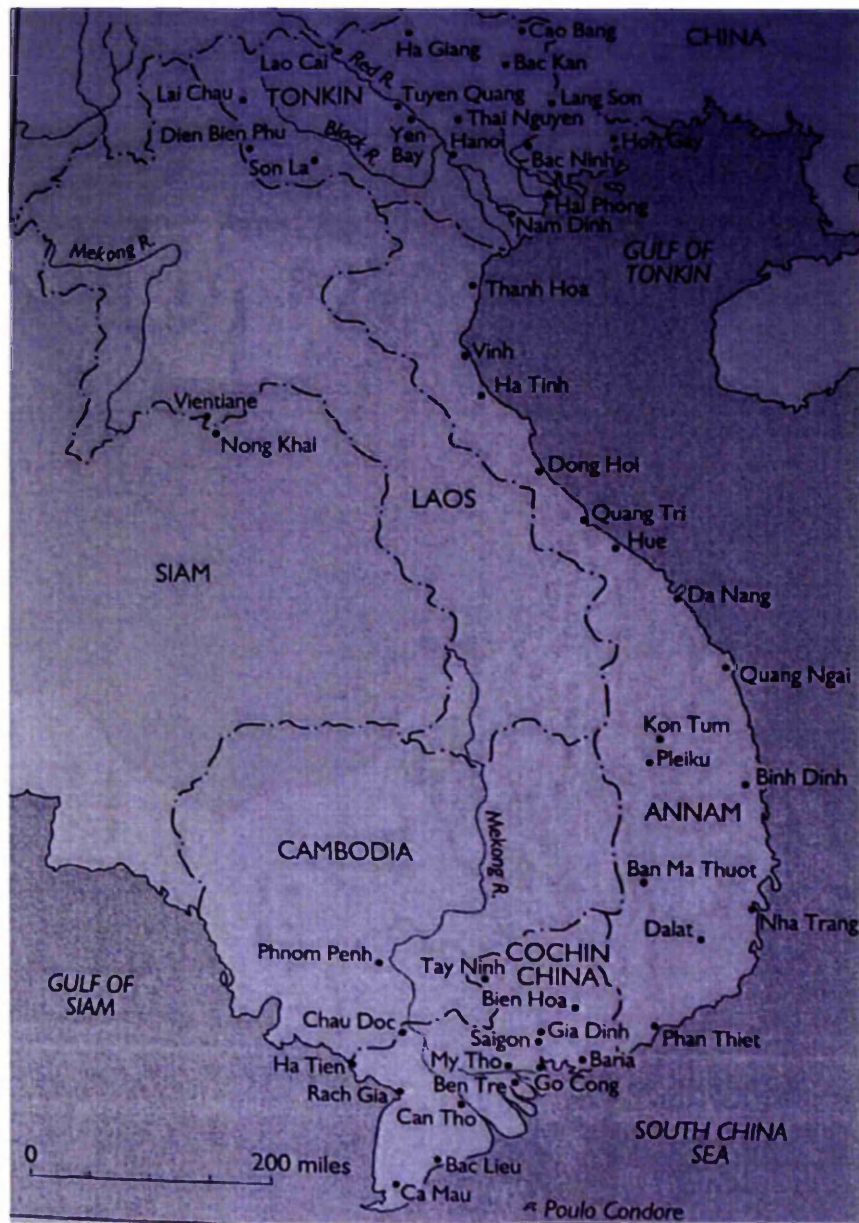
Illustrations

Plate 1 Postcard showing France's possessions in India



Postcard, publisher and date unknown

Plate 2 Map of colonial Indochina



Zinoman, *Colonial Bastille*, p.xii.

Plate 3 An Indian functionary and his family, Hanoi circa 1920



Courtesy M. Sinnas, Pondicherry

Plate 4 Tamil Muslim Merchants in Cochinchina



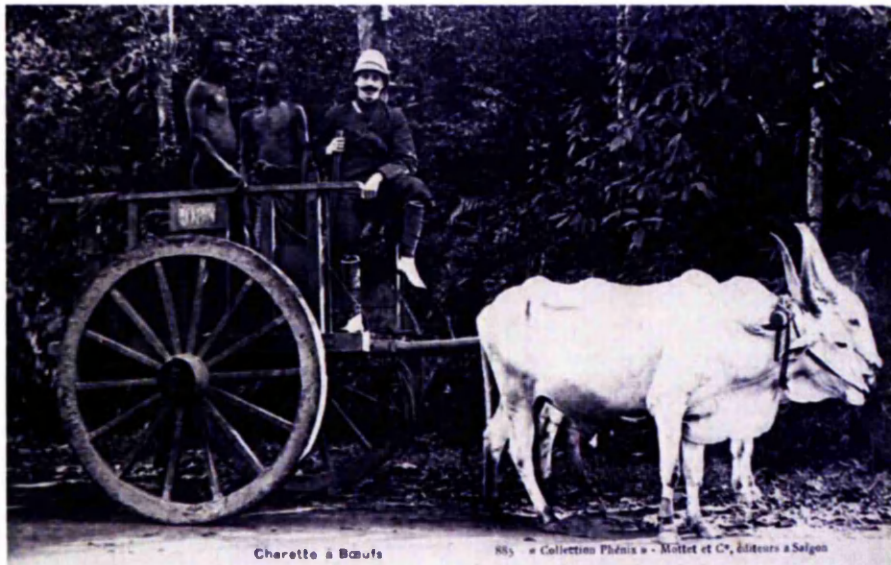
Editions Melle Cauvin, circa 1900

Plate 5 Chetty 'Types', Saigon



Mottet et Cie, circa 1910

Plate 6 Tamil Carters Cochinchina



Mottet et Cie circa 1900

Plate 7 Tamil milkman admonished by a Vietnamese servant



Advertisement for 'La petite fermière' milk, LTTV, 26 February, 1914

Plate 8 Indian Magistrate in Cochinchina and his wife, 1925



National Archives of Cambodia

Plate 9 Tamil Sesame Press, Cochinchina



Nadal, circa 1930

Plate 10 Public bill printed by 'a group of Indian voters', Cochinchina
Legislative election 1888

AUX ÉLECTEURS DE COCHINCHINE

Nous avons lu hier, sur les murs de Saigon, des affiches signées : *Un Groupe d'Électeurs*, dans lesquelles on reproche à M. Ternisien de « fonder son influence politique dans la Colonie, en s'appuyant sur les Indiens. »

Nous n'entreprendrons pas de défendre ici le candidat ainsi calomnié. Il sait se défendre mieux que nous ne saurions le faire. Il n'est pas, heureusement, de ceux qui ont horreur de la discussion publique. Tous ceux que l'amour de la vérité ou que le parti-pris n'aveugle pas, le savent. Passons.

Nous rechercherons seulement si le groupe d'électeurs qui patronne si chaudement la candidature de M. Carabelli peut décemment se réclamer des principes républicains, alors que ses tentatives qui consistent à établir une distinction entre des Français soumis aux mêmes lois (distinction basée sur la couleur de l'épiderme) sont comme un outrage aux principes mêmes qu'il invoque.

Il suffira du plus vulgaire bon sens pour faire justice de la manœuvre d'un Groupe dont le candidat n'a éprouvé aucune répugnance, il y a quelques mois à peine, à aller quêser de porte en porte les suffrages de ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui dédaigneusement les noirs de l'Inde.

Qui donc ne se rappelle le discours prononcé par M. Carabelli en 1885, au sein du Conseil colonial, pour revendiquer le droit des Indiens au compte de prévoyance que le Gouvernement leur conteste encore aujourd'hui.

Ad-il donc oublié, depuis cette époque, ce qu'il écrivait à M. La Porte, avocat à Pondichéry et chef du parti libéral de l'Inde française :

« J'ai, disait-il, puisé plus particulièrement ma force parmi les Indiens, » (lettre du 21 janvier 1885).

Et c'est ce même homme qui a, aujourd'hui, le triste courage de les répudier. Pouah !!!

Ces Noirs de l'Inde, M. Carabelli n'en a que faire en ce moment !!!

M. Carabelli ou son groupe (ce qui est tout comme) cherche à établir une caste dans la grande famille française, et il ose se dire républicain. Pouah !!!

Quant à nous qui ne voulons qu'un drapeau, le drapeau de la France républicaine, abritant tous ses Enfants, sans distinction aucune, nous invitons tous les Électeurs à se grouper autour d'un candidat, quel qu'il soit, qui a le respect de la parole donnée, qui ne trahira pas les intérêts de la Colonie, qui ne trouvera pas, dans la confiance que nous placerons en lui, le moyen de satisfaire ses appétits.

AUX URNES!

Pas d'abstentions!

Vive la République!

Vive la Cochinchine!

Un groupe d'Électeurs Indiens.

Saigon, le 24 mai 1888.

Imprimerie des Électeurs. — Saigon.

French National Overseas Archive

Plate 11 Voting card of an Indian, Virassamipoullé, Cochinchina Legislative Election, 1888



French National Overseas Archive

Plate 12 The 'Villa Ernest Outrey', Pondicherry



Photo N. Pairaudeau, January 2002

Plate 13 'Types of the Far East: Annamite, Chinese and Malabar'



Mottet et Cie, circa 1890

Plate 14 Recipients of the 'Bronze Medal for Mutuality' Symphorien Lami...



Plate 15 ...and Lourdes Nadin



Bulletin of the Mutuelle Hindoue, 1935

Plate 16 Advertisement for the Indian supplier 'Au Comptoir Hindou'

AU COMPTOIR HINDOU
152, RUE LAGRANDIÈRE - SAIGON

PRODUITS GAROUDA
VÉRITABLE SAVON DE MARSEILLE 72°.
prix très bas

CIGARETTES, MARQUE V^e BERTOMEU
goût Scaferlatti, 0.08 le paquet de 10 cigarettes

 **AU COMPTOIR HINDOU**
152, rue Lagrandière - SAIGON

Indochine-Inde, 1932

Plate 17 Announcement of a Tamil film screening in Saigon

Au Casino de Saigon
Du Vendredi 10 Juillet au Dimanche 12 Juillet 1936
Le grand film parlant tamoul
Mchini-Rukmangadha



Avec la célèbre vedette Miss M. S. Vijaya
Danzas de Rayadures avec les meilleures danseuses de l'Inde
DEUX SEANCES PAR JOUR
La première à 18 h. 30 — La seconde à 21 h. 30

Indochine-Inde, 5 July 1936

PART TWO

Chapter Four: Electoral Franchise

Very different attitudes prevailed towards native political franchise in the 'old colonies' and territories claimed for France in the late nineteenth century. The development of colonial representation, as one observer remarked in the 1930s, '[did] little to increase the French reputation for logic and order'.³⁶⁷ With the movement of Indians from the French Establishments to Cochinchina these different approaches were brought together, highlighting the marked imbalance between the electoral privileges of the Indians and the poor political representation of peoples native to Cochinchina. As this chapter will demonstrate, natives of French India who were resident in Cochinchina played no small role themselves in heightening this imbalance. They ardently defended the idea that they should continue to enjoy in Cochinchina the same political rights they had been granted at home in French India. Once the political rights of Indians residing in Cochinchina was secured, if not for French subjects then at least for those who had obtained French citizenship through their 'renunciation', then the form of political institutions in Cochinchina, the aspirations of French politicians in the colony and the desire of Indian French citizens to find people in power who could intervene on their behalf, all conspired to create a special form of electoral patronage in Cochinchina.

Native suffrage in the 'old colonies' and the 'new'

Lewis has described native assimilation in French colonial policy as a cyclical phenomenon linked to political upheavals in France through the nineteenth century: 'assimilative measures became associated with Republican governments, their abolition with the overthrow of these governments'.³⁶⁸ Although the political representation granted to natives of the 'old colonies' (the French Antilles, Réunion, French Guyana, Senegal and French India) was serially rescinded and reinstated throughout the nineteenth century, a measure of the greater generosity with which political assimilation was first

³⁶⁷ Rudolph A. Winnacker, 'Elections in Algeria and the French Colonies Under the Third Republic', *American Political Science Review*, no. 32, 1938, 261-277 (p. 262).

³⁶⁸ Deming Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen', p. 135.

granted in the heightened and heated contexts of the French revolution and the abolition of slavery was retained. This stands out in contrast to the markedly less generous political rights endowed upon people native to colonial possessions acquired in the second wave of French imperial acquisitions from the nineteenth century (Algeria, Cochinchina), whereby a 'clean slate' allowed for less liberal arrangements to be inscribed upon it.³⁶⁹

The privilege of electing a Deputy to represent their interests in French parliament was granted to Indians from the French Establishments for a brief period from 1848. Inhabitants of the French Establishments merely had to prove they had been resident in the French territories for at least five years in order to be able to vote. Proof of French citizenship was not required. Parliamentary representation was rescinded in French India in 1852, as it was in the other French colonies. In 1871, with the downfall of Napoleon III and the declaration of the Third Republic, it was again reinstated.³⁷⁰

Contrary to laws on universal (male) suffrage in France, the right to political representation in French India did not follow from French citizenship. Natives of French India had the right to exercise their political rights independently of their civil rights. They were allowed to enjoy, in their own colony, the political rights belonging to French citizens while retaining their indigenous personal status.³⁷¹ Thus Indian French subjects, although they had not made efforts to renounce their personal status and thereby acquire the status of citizens, were nonetheless able to vote in parliamentary elections. Similar arrangements prevailed in the other older French possessions. In the Four Communes of Senegal, for example, the (Muslim) African population insisted upon the principle of 'status naturalisation' (*naturalisation dans le statut*), whereby they conserved their personal status while acquiring the quality of French citizens, meaning they were subject to French public law but continued to be regulated by indigenous private laws.³⁷²

³⁶⁹ Winnacker, 'Elections in Algeria', p. 263.

³⁷⁰ Lewis, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen', pp. 134-135; Clairon, *La renonciation*, p. 79; H. Ternisien, 'La Question Electoral en Cochinchine', Supplement of *Journal d'Outre Mer*, 21 February 1888.

³⁷¹ See Girault, *Principes*, p. 566.

³⁷² See Mamadou Diouf, 'The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation', p. 675; Emmanuelle Saada, 'Citoyens et sujets de l'Empire Français: Les usages du droit dans la situation coloniale', *Genèses*, no. 53, 2003, 4-24 (p.18).

Cochinchina was granted its own representative in the French National Assembly from July 1881, but the right to vote for the Deputy was limited to those who counted as French citizens, either by birth or by naturalisation.³⁷³ The indigenous people of Cochinchina, in contrast to the relatively generous measure of political assimilation enjoyed by their Indian counterparts in the French Establishments, had no access to political representation in the Metropole. Only the limited number of non-European Cochinchinese who were granted French citizenship through naturalisation could enjoy political rights on par with French citizens in the colony. The electoral participation of Cochinchinese who were not naturalised was extremely limited.

The Vietnamese college of electors for colonial council elections was made up of a select few chosen by notables. While the municipal council elections for both Saigon and Cholon were open from 1881 to 'universal' indigenous suffrage, the tiny native electorate participated only in selecting a small number of native councillors whose power, in the shadow of a much larger majority of (French-elected) French councillors, was negligible at best.³⁷⁴ Although intended to correct this situation, reforms introduced in 1922 had little impact.³⁷⁵ As we shall see though, the first colonised people who argued for their right to political representation in Cochinchina were not Vietnamese, Cham or Khmer, but Indian migrants from the French possessions in India.

Having established that the political rights of the subjects of French India were more generous than those of their counterparts native to Cochinchina, it has to be admitted that elections in French India did not stand up to any real test of democracy. With the reintroduction of political franchise for natives of French India in 1871, two electoral lists were established, one for Europeans and one for natives, with the European list carrying the same weight as the native list despite the obvious difference in size of the two populations. The system of lists was introduced, as one commentator frankly put it, 'to avoid as much as possible the danger of *Hindu* domination'.³⁷⁶

³⁷³ Bouinais and Paulus, *L'Indo-Chine Française*, p. 88.

³⁷⁴ Camilli, *La représentation*, pp. 89-92.

³⁷⁵ See Hue-Tam Ho Tai, 'The Politics of Compromise', and R.B. Smith, 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party in French Cochinchina, 1917-1930', *Modern Asian Studies*, no. 3, 1969, 131-150 (p. 137).

³⁷⁶ Clairon, 'La Renonciation', p. 79.

Once renunciation was formally recognised a decade later, French India's system of electoral lists became subject to constant revision. For a brief period renouncers were allowed to vote on the 'European' list.³⁷⁷ 'Political considerations', however, 'quickly led to reform', and for four years (1881-1884) renouncers and non-renouncers shared the same electoral list.³⁷⁸ In 1884, the electorate was separated into three lists, one for Europeans, one for renouncers, and one for non-renouncers. To complicate matters, this change affected only local council elections, and neither this nor the previous decree had any retroactive effect, 'leaving on the European list Indian renouncers who had already been registered there'.³⁷⁹ In 1899, French India reverted to two electoral lists for local councils, one for Europeans and one for non-Europeans. Renouncers were permitted to register on the European list only if they could demonstrate that they had renounced at least fifteen years ago, that they were proficient in French, and that they held either a French diploma, an administrative or judiciary function, an elected position or a French honour.³⁸⁰ All of these changes were led by the obliquely-termed 'political considerations' mentioned above. These consisted of ongoing attempts by both the 'Indian' and 'French' parties in Pondicherry to shift the weight of the electoral colleges in their favour in order to gain influence through the ballot box.³⁸¹

The changes brought in 1899 were intended to quell accusations that the renouncers' list was being used to form coalitions to swing the vote, and that renunciation, now chiefly inspired 'by purely electoral considerations', was being denatured.³⁸² The colonial holdings at the Pondicherry archive, replete as they are with court cases brought by Europeans, créoles, and Indians alike contesting the results of colonial elections well beyond this date, attest that the reforms of 1899 did not manage to achieve this.³⁸³

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

³⁷⁸ Quote from Girault, *Principes*, p. 568; ANOM GGI50927 Situation des Indiens en Cochinchine au point de vue électoral 1900-1901.

³⁷⁹ ANOM GGI50927; Quote from Girault, *Principes*, p. 568.

³⁸⁰ Girault, *Principes*, p. 568; Clairon, 'La Renonciation', p. 96.

³⁸¹ Weber, *Pondichéry*, p. 241.

³⁸² Clairon, 'La renonciation', p. 89.

³⁸³ See, for example, NAIP DM 1928.

Early license at the Cochinchinese ballot box

Even as French India was embroiled in arguments over its electoral colleges, Indians in Cochinchina became engaged in debates about their electoral status in that colony. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century Cochinchina became a ground for testing whether the voting rights of Indians from the French Establishments, be they renouncers or non-renouncers, were transferable to other parts of the empire. The debate was shaped as much by Indians aiming to hold the French to their Republican ideals of equality, as by the recognition on the part of French colonial would-be politicians stationed in Cochinchina that the power of this particular native electorate could be usefully tapped.

Indians from the French Establishments began to participate (initially without hindrance) in political life in Cochinchina from the moment municipal councils were formed in Cholon and Saigon in the 1870s.³⁸⁴ A Mr. Douressamy-Naiker even served for six years as a municipal councillor for Saigon in the late 1870s and early 1880s.³⁸⁵ Moreover, Indians living in Cochinchina, unlike in French India, were included without exception in the same electoral colleges as European voters.

Indians from the French Establishments were similarly permitted, when parliamentary representation was first introduced to Cochinchina, to participate in elections to choose a Deputy for the colony. Nor was their participation a fact quietly hidden from view. Indeed, a petition drafted in the wake of the introduction of parliamentary representation, which pressed the Senators and Deputies of France to approve a Cochinchinese Deputy, was signed by 154 'inhabitants of Cochinchina', thirty of whom were Indians.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ On Indian participation see ANOM FM Indo AF53: Laurans to Senator for French India, 15 March 1888; Ternisien, 'La Question Electorale en Cochinchine', Supplement of *Journal d'Outre Mer*, 21 February 1888. On the establishment of electoral colleges in Cochinchina: Ho Tai, 'Politics of Compromise', p. 377; Camilli, *La représentation*, pp. 90-92.

³⁸⁵ ANOM FM Indo AF53: Laurans to Senator for French India, 15 March 1888.

³⁸⁶ ANOM FM Indo AF52: 'Petition adressée à Messieurs les Sénateurs et à Messieurs les Députés de France par les signataires' [n.d.].

Further evidence of the active participation of Indian voters in early Cochinchinese colonial politics is seen in the championing of Indian causes by the colony's first Deputy, Marie Jules Blancsubé. Blancsubé, a *métropolitain* from the high Alps, began his Cochinchinese career as a lawyer in Saigon, and acted as Mayor of the city from 1879 to 1881, prior to entering legislative politics.³⁸⁷ Serving as Deputy from 1881 until his death in March of 1888, he was the first in a line of Deputies who learned to court the Indian vote in Cochinchina to their advantage, using his term in local politics as his training ground. Both as Mayor and as Deputy, Blancsubé was noted for his support of Indian causes. His portrayal in Brébion's biography of Indochinese personalities, as, 'very popular amongst the numerous *Malabar* cloth merchants of Saigon', points to the diverse Indian electorate he patronised which would have included the many Indians employed in the administration (who had renounced or were about to make the decision in this period to renounce), and the merchants who for the most part would chose to remain French subjects. Because Blancsubé :

always upheld [French Indian interests] in the municipal councils and in front of tribunals...his name became for the natives of India a superlative for comparison. Thus, to a client who cast in doubt the quality of their merchandise on display [the Indian merchants] would say with conviction: 'This first quality, better even, same thing Blancsubé!' (*Cela première qualité, plus meilleur, meme chose Blancsubé!*).³⁸⁸

'The French spokesman in the Colonial Council of Cochinchina for the Indians resident in that colony', as Osborne describes him, enjoyed nearly three terms as Deputy, tapping into the strength of this small but powerful group of voters, before the legitimacy of Indian participation in Cochinchinese elections was questioned.³⁸⁹

The Indian vote contested

In 1887, the Director of the Interior for Cochinchina Noel Pardon noted that Saigon's Mayor had newly registered 345 Indians resident in the city alongside

³⁸⁷ Antoine Brébion, *Dictionnaire de Bio-Biographie Générale de l'Indochine Française*, Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques Maritimes et Coloniales, 1935, p. 84.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³⁸⁹ Osborne, *French Presence*, p. 191.

Europeans in his annual exercise of drawing up the lists for colonial and legislative elections.³⁹⁰ Alarmed at the sudden increase in the size of the 'French' electorate, Pardon penned a series of complaints questioning the Mayor's action. Asking that 'Indians who could not prove their French citizenship' be struck from the electoral roles in Cochinchina, he set in motion a protracted debate over which Indians from the French Establishments, if any, were true 'citizens' and whether they could exercise their voting rights in Cochinchina.³⁹¹ The arguments he raised illustrate several of the problems faced by French colonial authorities pressed to respect regulations prevailing in other parts of France's colonial empire.

Pardon's main objections were that renunciation did not confer citizenship and, moreover, was not transferable to another colony. According to the wording of the decree on renunciation, renouncers acquired, 'the civil and political rights applicable to the French *in the colony of French India*' [my emphasis].³⁹² The political rights given to non-renouncers' in India, Pardon argued, were equally non-transferable.³⁹³

A further problem Pardon put forward, which would be would raised again by other Cochinchinese officials trying to grapple with Indian voting rights, was that of how to establish any equivalence between the situation in the French Establishments, with its complicated and ever-changing system of electoral colleges, and the situation in Cochinchina. At the time of Pardon's writing, three electoral lists were in place in French India (one 'European', one renouncer and one non-renouncer). The only Indians allowed to vote on the European list were a limited number of renouncers of longer-standing who remained on the list otherwise reserved for Europeans. In Cochinchina, for lack of any alternative, Indians simply voted with Europeans for both colonial and parliamentary elections. If Indians were to remain on European electoral lists in Cochinchina, Pardon

³⁹⁰ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233 Elections coloniales Inscription des natifs de l'Inde 1887: Director of Interior to Municipal Commission of Saigon, 31 January 1887.

³⁹¹ Ibid.: 'Memoire à l'appui', signed Government Advocate, 2 May 1887.

³⁹² *Annuaire des Etablissements français dans l'Inde pour l'année 1881*, pp. 472-473

³⁹³ VNA2 SL120 Reinscription des Indiens sur les listes électorales, 1887 – 1888: 'Conclusions', signed Director of the Interior, 15 February 1887.

worried, 'their electoral condition in Cochinchina would be infinitely superior to their condition in India'.³⁹⁴

This practical question of legal equivalence was also politically charged. Pardon's other claim, that Cochinchinese authorities risked affronting native Vietnamese sensibilities by granting privileges to other colonial peoples, was to be oft repeated by those seeking later to curb the recognition of Indian French citizens' status in Cochinchina. Pardon missed the implications of this position as it applied to Cochinchina's French masters, though, as did those who would later make similar arguments. He maintained that granting Indians voting rights if they were not citizens would offend the 'Annamites' who 'for their part, are in their own country; who pay taxes, who furnish the coffers of the local budget of the colony and who give generously when it is necessary of their blood for the defence of the greater interests of France in Indo-china'.³⁹⁵

Pardon's request to strike Indians from the electoral registers was rejected by the Municipal Commission in February 1887. The Commission maintained that both renounced and non-renounced Indians had been granted the same political rights as French citizens, and therefore should retain the vote and remain on European electoral lists in Cochinchina. A subsequent appeal to the Justice of the Peace of Saigon in March 1887 was rejected in the same terms.³⁹⁶ It is with this appeal though, that we get the first indication of Indian involvement in the debate. The Justice of the Peace delayed his decision on Pardon's appeal, because : 'Mr. Laurans, defence lawyer, has just informed me that he was charged by the natives of India to defend their cause before my tribunal'.³⁹⁷

By now, Pardon had begun to concede that renounced Indians might remain on electoral lists. But he continued to oppose the inclusion of the larger group of non-

³⁹⁴ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233: Director of the Interior to President and councillors of the Civil Chamber of the Court of Appeal (*Cassation*), 9 July 1887.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.: 'Memoire à l'appui', signed by Government Advocate, 2 May 1887.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.: Justice of the Peace Saigon to Director of the Interior CCH, 23 February 1887

renouncers and made an appeal to that effect to the Supreme Court in Paris. Disturbed perhaps by the Indians' own legal challenge, Pardon emphasised in his new appeal the threat that Indian suffrage posed to European power in Cochinchina. The presence of non-renouncers on electoral lists alongside Europeans risked tipping the balance out of European favour:

The imprudence [of too freely registering Indians to vote] is of even more gravity if we take into account the reduced numbers of the electoral body in Cochinchina on which individuals unjustifiably registered in this way can exert a heavy influence.³⁹⁸

Moreover, the Indian community was not to be trusted and was quite capable of using a situation of electoral power to its advantage:

The non-renounced Indians...registered on the same electoral lists as the Europeans, enjoy for the election of the colonial and Municipal councillors identical rights [to Europeans]... thanks to their continually increasing numbers and to the restrained number of the rest of the electoral body in Cochinchina, they could soon come to impose [their own people as elected representatives] on French electors from Europe and on an indigenous Annamite population... This hypothesis is not exaggerated: the ties that exist between the members of the Indian Colony in Cochinchina make of them a menace.³⁹⁹

In numerical terms, Pardon was not wrong to anticipate that electors from French India could come to dominate the European vote. Figures for the Deputy election of 1888 (drawn from the lists which initially alarmed Pardon) show that the total number of French citizens (including naturalised citizens) in the colony came to 1,752. French Indians registered on the electoral roles included 64 renouncers and 342 who had not renounced.⁴⁰⁰ Although the number of renouncers and non-renouncers, taken together, still fell short of a quarter of the electorate, this was pushed higher by the numbers of Europeans who could be expected to be away on leave at any given time.⁴⁰¹ Moreover, the number of Indians from the French Establishments present in Cochinchina was

³⁹⁸ Ibid.: Director of the Interior to President and councillors of the Civil Chamber of the Court of Appeal (Cassation), 9 July 1887.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ VNA2 SL120: Secretariat, City of Saigon to Head of Electoral Commission Torcapel, [n.d.].

⁴⁰¹ VNA2 Goucoch 1B.29/233: 'Memoire a l'appui', 2 May 1887.

expected to increase, and was indeed from some French colonial quarters actively encouraged.⁴⁰²

While Pardon was concerned that Indians would come to outnumber the European electorate, he also doubted Cochinchinese authorities were absolutely sure of the status of Indians in their jurisdictions. This was despite immigration controls by which all British Indian residents were registered in congregations, and Indians originating from the French possessions were subject to formal registration.⁴⁰³ When Pardon wrote to the Governor of French India seeking further information about the electoral situation of a list of 345 Indians against whose registration he had initially objected, he found the response wanting. The Governor replied that twenty of the individuals in question were registered to vote on the European list in India, twelve were registered on the renouncers' list, and another twelve on the list of non-renouncers. A full 118 were 'unknown' in French India, and of the remaining 103 the Governor had 'insufficient information'.⁴⁰⁴

Pardon's second appeal was successful. The Supreme Court ruled: 'Non-renounced Indians do not, contrary to the opinion put forward up until this date, have the right to exercise outside of the French Establishments in India, the electoral rights which the legislation has permitted them to enjoy within their own country'.⁴⁰⁵

This might have resolved the issue, with renouncers retaining their right to vote in Cochinchina and non-renouncers relinquishing theirs. However, the Governor General of Indochina Constans, (placed provisionally in the newly established post), interpreted the Supreme Court's decision in a much broader sense than it had been intended. He then issued the following order:

According to the terms of the order of the Supreme Court of Appeal, non-renounced Indian are not electors. The order also states implicitly that the

⁴⁰² Ternisien, 'La Question Electorale en Cochinchine, *Journal d'Outre Mer*, 21 February 1888.

⁴⁰³ VNA2 SL1825 Arrêté soumettant les Indiens et malais non-sujets français au regime de la congregation, 1874; ANOM Fonds de la mairie de Saigon 127MIOM1 Registre destiné à l'inscription des asiatiques qui ont justifié de leur qualité de français 1880-1948.

⁴⁰⁴ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233: Director of the Interior to President and councillors of the Civil Chamber of the Court of Appeal, 9 July 1887.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.: Supreme Court of Appeal Decision [*arrêté*], 3 Jan 1888.

same applies to renouncers. Ensure actions are taken to strike one and the other from the electoral lists.⁴⁰⁶

It is difficult to justify Constans' action other than to say that his term of office was short and troubled. He resigned after six months' in office and, according to Brébion, was violently criticised by his successor.⁴⁰⁷ With no previous experience of either Cochinchina or French India, he might not have been expected to fully appreciate the complexities of the case. Yet lawyer and Deputy Blancsubé, the man most likely to challenge Constans' order, died in the very week in which it was issued. An election for a new Deputy to replace him was suddenly called for in May of that year.⁴⁰⁸ It was Indians themselves at this point, or more precisely renouncers, who began to play a prominent role in defending their own case.

The 1888 Deputy elections: a last-minute rescue for the Indian vote

By the time Constans' order was transmitted to local levels to strike all Indian voters off the electoral rolls, it was mid-March, and two short months away from the election. Carabelli, the Mayor of Saigon, hesitated when he received the instructions. In his reply he claimed, citing regulations, that the deadline beyond which electoral rolls in a given year could not be altered had passed. He would have to refer any legal changes to the Justice of the Peace. Yet Mayor Carabelli's correspondence was strangely worded. He objected by deferring to the letter of the law, but closed his correspondence by suggesting the final decision would be his alone, and would take time despite the pressing deadline: 'Your order, Mr. Lieutenant Governor, has perplexed me; I need to think seriously, and at length. I must act with the greatest patience....and I will give you my decision in due course'. The very next day, he penned a second letter stating he would go ahead and strike all Indians off the list. No legal barriers were mentioned, and no further hesitation expressed.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.: Telegram GGI to Lt GCCH, 3 March 1888.

⁴⁰⁷ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 93.

⁴⁰⁸ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 404.

⁴⁰⁹ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233: Mayor Saigon to Lt GCCH, 14 March 1888.

I have mentioned a group of Indians resident in Cochinchina who hired a lawyer in February of 1887 to defend their electoral rights, thereby delaying the Pardon's appeal. There is no further evidence of this group through 1887, but they resurface in a letter dated 15 March, the day after Mayor Carabelli had acted upon Constans' order and removed them from Cochinchina's electoral lists. In the letter their lawyer Laurans appealed to Jacques Hébrard, Senator for French India asking for the Senator's support in 'repairing the injustice' done specifically to renouncers, (the letter makes clear the group consists of renouncers), who he claimed should be treated as full French citizens.⁴¹⁰ A letter written some days later to Senator Hébrard, and signed by fifty-two 'citizens of the French Establishments in India' appealed to the Senator's 'high influence' and asked, with a view to shaming Carabelli, that he 'indicate to the Chamber and the country how the local authorities in Cochinchina understand respect for the law and universal suffrage'.⁴¹¹

The next ruling on Indian voting rights in Cochinchina to be issued in Paris reached the colony on 10 May 1888, three days short of the planned election. Suddenly, an order was received in Saigon to reverse again the most recent instruction. All Indians resident in Cochinchina who originated from the French possessions were to be re-registered on electoral lists and given the chance to vote. Striking Indians from Cochinchina's electoral roles, the order stated, had been 'irregular'.⁴¹² The lawyer Laurens lost no time in making public his role in this decision and in taking partial credit for the outcome. In a notice addressed to 'Indian voters' which appeared in the *Courrier de Saigon* on 11 May, Laurans maintained that it was 'on the request of Hébrard, Senator for French India' that Indians had been put back on the electoral lists in Cochinchina. 'Therefore', he continued, 'it is thanks to our joint efforts that you are able to exercise your political rights'.⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ ANOM FM Indo AF53: Laurans to Senator for French India Hébrard, 15 March 1888.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.: French citizens of India to Senator Hébrard, 24 March 1888.

⁴¹² ANOM GGI9230 Elections legislatives, 1888-1893: Report GCCH to GGI, 18 May 1888.

⁴¹³ Laurans, 'Aux Electeurs Indiens: renonçants et non-renonçants', *Courrier de Saigon*, 11 May 1888.

The involvement of the group of renouncers and their lawyer Laurans provides an explanation for the decision to restore renouncers' electoral rights in Cochinchina, but it is less clear what prompted the court in Paris to also reverse the decision with respect to non-renouncers. The decision may have been grounded, however, in the type of argument presented by Ternisien, a Saigon-based lawyer. He had published a defence of Indians' voting rights more generally, and non-renouncer rights specifically, in an open letter to the Secretary of State some months' earlier. Any question of retracting Indian voting rights in Cochinchina was 'regrettable': 'It affects Frenchmen who have contributed to the [Cochinchinese] economy with intelligence, industry, and capital, by taking away the rights we have given them in their country of origin'. Ternisien's interpretation of what constituted French citizenship was the most liberal of any in the extended debate. He claimed that when in 1819 Indians had first been granted the right to be judged by their own personal laws, this had amounted to 'status naturalisation'. That is, the Indians had acquired French citizenship even while retaining their personal laws.⁴¹⁴ Ternisien insisted these rights had never been clearly rescinded in law: 'The *Indous* have remained in 1888 what they were in 1819; that is, citizens able to exercise their civic rights, in India as much as in Cochinchina.'

Whether it was Ternisien's letter or another intervention that prompted the court to once again include non-renouncers on electoral lists we do not know. Although renouncers by this time had begun to take an active role in the debate, there is very little evidence that non-renouncers were similarly so impassioned. The effect of this latest order to restore the names of Indians from the French Establishments to Cochinchina's electoral lists, however, is more clear. As a result, the 1888 Deputy election was fought over the single issue of whether migrants from the French Establishments in India could vote in Cochinchina.

The candidates and their campaigns

⁴¹⁴ Girault, *Principes*, pp. 391-392.

The three candidates for the 1888 Deputy elections in Cochinchina were all compromised in some way in their bid for Cochinchina's seat in the National Assembly, but none more so than Saigon's Mayor Carabelli. Carabelli, of Corsican origin, had arrived in Cochinchina as a defence lawyer in 1881 and served as a municipal counsellor in Saigon until he was elected Mayor in 1884. He retained the office of Mayor until 1890. This despite, as the biographer Brébion notes, his 'notorious incompetence and lack of comportment which made him the subject of scorn'.⁴¹⁵

We do not know whether an election had yet been called formally, nor whether Carabelli had already decided to run for the position of Deputy when he was ordered in March 1888 to strike Indian voters from the electoral lists. Blancsubé had died on 11 March, only two days before Carabelli wrote to the Lieutenant Governor expressing his initial hesitation.⁴¹⁶ We can only speculate too, about whether Carabelli had weighed up his own prospects as a candidate when he decided to exclude the Indians from voting. But the fact that as Mayor, Carabelli had personally signed letters informing Indians resident in the colony of the decision to strike them from the electoral rolls can have done nothing to improve his chances with these voters when they were placed back on the electoral lists in early May.⁴¹⁷ And in his handling of the electoral lists, his characteristic traits throughout the electoral campaign – a resistance to the authority of his superiors and an erratic, about-face style of decision making – were already in evidence.

Carabelli resisted taking any action when the news was conveyed to him in mid-May that the Indians' removal from electoral lists was deemed 'irregular' in Paris, and that he must once again allow them to vote. His reaction, understandable only as the desperate act in his position as an electoral candidate, amounted to an act of insubordination in his role as Mayor. In a letter to the Lieutenant Governor, he stated that he was going to continue to ignore the order to re-register Indians on the electoral lists, 'as long as it is not illegal'. Using the same procedural reasons he cited two months'

⁴¹⁵ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 61.

⁴¹⁶ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 404.

⁴¹⁷ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233: Mayor Saigon to Agnissamy de la Perle, Gerard, and Blanpain, 20 March 1888.

previously when instructed to remove them from the electoral roll, Carabelli now claimed:

I regret I am unable to follow up on the invitation that you have given me to restore the Indians to the electoral lists, but it is not in my power to do so, as the law is categorical on this subject.⁴¹⁸

Three days away from the opening of the polls, the Governor General threatened to remove the Mayor if he persisted in disobeying orders. 'I have taken orders from the Minister', he wrote, 'to find out whether...if the Mayor refuses to follow orders proscribed by law, the Governor can go ahead and act without him'. Prior to taking this step, the Governor General suggested that, 'as the Mayor is a candidate for the position of Deputy,' it would be preferable, 'in the interest of impartiality', if the orders of the Minister and the intentions of the administration could be made clear to him and Carabelli could be convinced to change his mind.⁴¹⁹ The same day, the Lieutenant Governor of Cochinchina gave the Mayor a deadline of ten o'clock that morning to put the Indians back on the electoral lists: 'Do not see this as a threat, time is pressing'.⁴²⁰ The Mayor finally gave in, insisting that there was, 'no bias' on his part. He would hold the Governor responsible however, for the act of restoring the Indians to the electoral list, which he still considered to be 'illegal'.⁴²¹

The two other candidates were lawyers Ternisien and Laurans, both of whom had already publicly defended the rights of Indians to vote in Cochinchina. That neither was much less compromised than Carabelli as an electoral hopeful is revealed through the aggressive campaign strategy fought by the three candidates through publicly-posted printed bills.

Henry Ternisien was a West Indian créole, although whether he was of 'pure' European or of mixed origins is unclear.⁴²² He had served as a magistrate in Cochinchina, making a previous unsuccessful bid for the post of Deputy in 1885 (losing to Blancsubé,

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.: Mayor Saigon to Lieutenant Governor Cochinchina, 9 May 1888.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.: GGI to Lt GCCH, 10 May 1888.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.: Lt GCCH to Mayor Saigon, 10 May 1888.

⁴²¹ Ibid.: Mayor Saigon to Lt. GCCH, 10 May 1888.

⁴²² Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 403; Osborne, *French Presence*, p. 218.

an 'avowed adversary').⁴²³ He was among the colons and merchants who made up Norodom's 'cosmopolitan court' in the early 1880s, and who had been held responsible for the revolt which followed the Cambodian king's forced signing of the treaty of June 1884 ceding key powers from the Cambodian throne to France.⁴²⁴ With the backing of the Cambodian monarch, Ternisien had become involved in the construction of the railway in Cambodia and obtained a vital mining concession as part of the deal.⁴²⁵

Little is known about Laurans other than that he practiced law in Cochinchina. We do not know precisely when he declared his candidacy, save that it had been made public by the time he published his notice congratulating himself. From that notice it was already evident that there was little subtlety about him. 'In casting all your votes for me', he stated baldly, 'you will show just how grateful you are. To Sunday then! And no abstentions!'.⁴²⁶ A mere three days before the election was held he appealed again to Indian voters to thank him for his legal assistance by casting their votes in his favour.⁴²⁷

Laurans focussed his energies on attacking Ternisien, having decided perhaps that Carabelli was already too discredited to be a real contender. If Laurans assumed all too baldly the complete venality of Indians as voters, what is more remarkable about this candidate is that he suddenly abandoned any effort to court the Indian vote. Instead, he attacked Ternisien as the 'stooge' (*féal*) of the *Hindous*, including, for good measure, some reference to the Cambodian past of the 'suspect man of affairs' who 'for 300,000 piastres was willing to traffic with Norodom'.⁴²⁸ We have no record of what prompted this abrupt change of tactic, but the transformation was indeed complete. Styling himself now as the protector of 'French dominance', he warned voters:

If you want to see the Indian element invading the Colony; if you want to see cargoes of Indians arriving here with the aim of voting, of occupying positions that the French could fill, then vote for Mr. Ternisien.⁴²⁹

⁴²³ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 404.

⁴²⁴ Osborne, *French Presence*, pp. 175-205, esp. 191, 218.

⁴²⁵ 'Le Passé de Ternisien : Extraits du *Saigonais* du 30 avril 1888', *Courrier de Saigon*, 11 May 1888, p.1.

⁴²⁶ Laurans, 'Aux Electeurs Indiens: renonçants en non-renonçants', *Courrier de Saigon*, 11 May 1888.

⁴²⁷ ANOM FM Indo AF53: campaign poster 'Citoyens...le candidat de l'idée française', signed 'Laurans'.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.: Campaign poster 'Citoyens, Deux politiques...' signed 'Laurans'.

This sudden change of strategy did nothing to help Laurans' bid for a seat in Parliament. He was eliminated in the first round of voting.

Carabelli, for his part, made full use of Ternisien's Cambodian past to discredit his candidacy. His campaign posters depicted Ternisien as a man 'disconcerted' by the 'glacial reception' at his first electoral rally, held not long after his return from Cambodia. Carabelli accused Ternisien of having, 'begun to lose confidence in his bid,' claiming he had supported the re-registration of Indians on the electoral rolls as an opportunistic attempt to re-establish himself after his 'anti-patriotic' acts in Cambodia. Ternisien hoped, Carabelli claimed, 'to turn [the Indian votes] to his profit on election day and to use them to counterbalance the European and créole votes which he has definitely lost.'⁴³⁰

In other posters issued by Carabelli supporters, Ternisien was described as a 'poor citizen' and a 'candidate for the *Malabars*'.⁴³¹ He was accused of having influenced the Minister of the Marine's decision to put Indians back on the electoral rolls:

The methods of Ternisien are at last having effect. Because of his repeated claims, the Minister of the Marine ordered yesterday the re-inscription on Cochinchinese electoral lists of 420 Indians who had been struck off following an order of the Supreme Court of Appeal.⁴³²

The latter poster went on to announce, if it had not been obvious already, that the right of Indians to vote was a racial issue, and it was over this issue that the election was to be fought:

Those who still have their doubts should now open their eyes. Mr. Ternisien wants to establish his political influence in the colony by supporting the Indians. He is putting forward the question of colour and of race. Electors now find themselves in the presence of two candidates: Mr. Ternisien,

⁴³⁰ Ibid.: Campaign poster 'Citoyens' signed 'R. Carabelli'.

⁴³¹ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233: Campaign poster 'Aux Electeurs !', signed 'R. Carabelli'.

⁴³² Ibid.: Campaign poster 'Aux Electeurs de Cochinchine', signed 'Un Groupe d'Electeurs'.

representative of the black element, and Mr. Carabelli, [representative of] the opinion and the policies of the white. Under these conditions, any hesitation on the part of European and créole electors would be an error. [They must] join forces in an act of preservation and defence. Let Mr. Ternisien stay then, as he wishes, the candidate for the blacks (*noirs*) of India; Mr. Carabelli carries with confidence the flag of the whites. Let us rally behind him and with him and fight the good fight.⁴³³

The complexity of colonial society is encapsulated in the Carabelli camp's attempt to exploit créole anxieties over their ambiguous identities by pressing them to side with the 'whites'. Taken Ternisien's own West Indian origins, this tactic may be understood as a questioning of Ternisien's own origins, and a further attempt to 'blacken' his campaign.

Ternisien's defence of Indian voting rights is amply documented in his correspondence with the authorities leading up to and during the election. His support for the Indian cause is not as prominent in his public election campaign, however, as it is in his rivals' attacks against him. Ternisien referred only subtly to Laurans' participation in securing the Indian vote, and went on to attribute baser aims to both Laurans and Carabelli. Both, he claimed, had been 'taxed by the drop in rents' and would, if elected, use municipal funds to build strategically placed boulevards to raise the value of the properties they owned.⁴³⁴

Ternisien appears to have left it to Indian voters, who were only too eager to do so, to attack his rival Carabelli. A poster signed by 'A group of Indian voters' accused Carabelli of hypocrisy, claiming that a few short months previously he had 'demonstrated no repugnance' for them. He had, they claimed, defended their rights to a colonial pension in a speech to the Colonial Council in 1885, and even communicated with Pounnoutamby LaPorte to assure him that Carabelli 'paid particular attention to the Indian cause'.⁴³⁵ Yet now, 'it is this same man who has the sad courage to repudiate us,' and who 'dares to call himself a Republican... 'Pouah!!!'. Without naming outright a preference for any single candidate, the poster closed by stating: 'For our part... We

⁴³³ Ibid.: Campaign poster 'Aux Electeurs de Cochinchine'.

⁴³⁴ ANOM FM Indo AF53: Campaign poster signed Ternisien.

⁴³⁵ The affair of colonial pensions (*compte de prévoyance*) is taken up in the next chapter.

invite all voters to rally around a candidate who does not seek in the trust we place in him the means to satisfy his own appetites' (see Plate 10).⁴³⁶ If their reference was to Ternisien, as it appears to have been, his assistance to Indian voters in the second round leaves unclear to what degree he was driven entirely by his Republican principles or coached along by his appetite for political power.

Election day and the outcome

Following Mayor Carabelli's reluctant agreement on 10 May to restore Indians to the electoral lists, supplementary lists were hastily added enabling them to vote in the first round of Deputy elections, held three days' later on 13 May, 1888. He won the greatest number of votes but lacked a majority, so the voting went to a second round. A report on the first round of voting noted that, because of the 'length and the spelling' of Tamil names, some of them were so disfigured on the electoral roles that it was impossible to tally them with names on the electoral cards of the voters (see Plate 11). Ternisien submitted a complaint about this, and requested that the lists be corrected prior to the second round due to be held on 27 May.⁴³⁷

If the first round took place with relative calm, the candidates' personal attacks on one another notwithstanding, the second round proceeded somewhat differently. The morning of the election Carabelli wrote a letter to the head Police Commissioner instructing him to come immediately to the Municipality and to personally take charge of the police forces. Carabelli informed him:

I have decided not to allow the Indians to vote. I have already informed the Governor General. It is possible that some agitated or poorly advised spirits may put up resistance. You will undertake the means to prevent them once they appear, and you must take care not to permit any gathering of Indians or of Europeans in front of the Municipality. All your European agents must be put into service and at your disposal. You must arrest any Indians who are too recalcitrant and conduct them to the nearest post. Towards the Europeans, behave properly but be firm. You must remain constantly at my disposal in

⁴³⁶ ANOM FM Indo AF53: Campaign poster 'Aux Électeurs de Cochinchine'.

⁴³⁷ VNA2 SL120: Draft report Electoral commission (?) to Governor General, 4 June 1888.

the polling room...I will give you other orders according to the circumstances.⁴³⁸

According to his own account, when the District Commissioner on morning duty arrived at the polling station located in the City Hall, he found Carabelli had ousted the committee set up to guard the ballot box, and had established himself as its president. As the polls opened, he reported that two (metropolitan) Frenchmen questioned the legality of armed police present at the polling station, and expressed their outrage at Carabelli's flouting of the law. Despite their complaints, the policemen stayed on.⁴³⁹ Ternisien was present in the room, as well as:

about two hundred other people, among whom were many *Malabars* who protested energetically against the makeup of the polling office and mostly against the presence of Mr. Carabelli who had just torn up the voting ballot of Mr. Pharod-Nemour, an Indian registered on the supplementary list of Indians as number 1474.⁴⁴⁰

When asked why he had ousted the committee, Carabelli simply replied, 'I had second thoughts'. This caused those present to erupt into cries of 'Take him away, we will not vote!'. The room was cleared by the police and voters were then asked to enter two at a time to vote. Five Indians who presented themselves to vote, Arrokiassamy, Leroy, Mikel, Filon and Samy Gnanapoullé, were reportedly refused, told by Carabelli that they 'did not have the right'. These men left and, according to the District Commissioner, 'went to find Mr. Ternisien', who, 'objected against such a measure and advised them as well as other Indians out in the street to follow him to the Lieutenant Governor to claim their rights'. Ternisien, 'then mounted into the Tilbury of Mr. Faciolle, others took *Malabar* carriages and still others followed on foot.'⁴⁴¹

The Lieutenant Governor gave the Indians permission to vote in Gia Định, just north of Saigon, 'to avoid disorder in the centre of the city.' 244 Indians cast their votes

⁴³⁸ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233: Mayor Saigon to Central Police Commissioner, 27 May 1888.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.: Police Commissioner 1st District to Central Police Commissioner, 28 May 1888.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

there.⁴⁴² Returning to the municipality, 'Mr. Ternisien hired nearly all of the carriages called 'Malabars' and invited everyone to get into the vehicles, which he paid for to take them to vote in Gia Định.' As they were leaving, one Indian shouted from his carriage, 'Everyone who voted for Carabelli is a coward!'. One Mr. Perrin, leaving the polling station at the time, yelled out in reply his doubts about the Indians' right to vote. 'I am no more of a coward than you', he cried and because the Indians had not fulfilled military service, 'have you paid your debt to the country?...No? Well then...what do you have to say?'⁴⁴³

Houlette, the District Commissioner on duty in the afternoon in central Saigon, witnessed the Indian voters returning from Gia Định. He described this unlikely procession of 'Malabars' in 'Malabar coaches': 'All evening numerous carriages full of Indians passed in front of the Municipality and these people...did not waste the opportunity to show their satisfaction and defiance to the polling office with shouts and cries'.⁴⁴⁴

The outcome of the 1888 Deputy election across Cochinchina was 664 for Ternisien and 488 for Carabelli.⁴⁴⁵ A breakdown of the Indian votes cast was 244 in Gia Định, none in Saigon and Cholon, and 18 votes in the other towns of Cochinchina. Of the 258 ballots deposited in the urn in Gia Định, Ternisien took 250 votes, and Carabelli a mere eight.⁴⁴⁶

A definitive legal ruling

Although Ternisien emerged the victor in the 1888 election, he never assumed the position of Deputy. On 6 November of the same year the Chamber of Deputies annulled the 1888 Deputy election, on the grounds that the participation of non-renouncers had in fact been illegitimate.⁴⁴⁷ Although no subsequent election in Cochinchina was run quite

⁴⁴² Ibid.: Administrator Marquis to Director of Local Services, 4 June 1888.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.: Police Commissioner District Two to Central Police Commissioner, 28 May 1888.

⁴⁴⁵ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 404.

⁴⁴⁶ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233; Administrator Marquis to Director of Local Services, 4 June 1888.

⁴⁴⁷ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 404.

so boldly on the singular issue of the Indian vote, it was to be another ten years before the question of Indians' eligibility to vote in Cochinchina was finally resolved in the courts.

A decision of the Saigon Justice of the Peace the following year (27 February, 1889) took both renouncers and non-renouncers back off of electoral lists for Cochinchina. Two groups of French Indians appealed to the Supreme Court in Paris against this decision. The first appeal was brought by the renouncer Adicéam and a group of eight renounced Indians. A non-renouncer, Cadarsah, led the second appeal, representing thirty-eight other non-renounced Indians.⁴⁴⁸

Cadarsah's appeal on behalf of the non-renouncers was rejected. Their right to vote in French India, the Supreme Court ruled, was a 'concession of a specific and localised right [that] has in no way had for effect to concede to them the complete rights and the quality of French citizen allowing them to claim the right to vote, either in other colonies or in the Metropole.'⁴⁴⁹ This rested as the final word on non-renouncers' right to vote away from their home colony.

The case of the group of renouncers led by Adicéam, however, was upheld. Adicéam had already shown he was well-attuned to colonial law and able to present its contradictions to his colonisers when during the 1888 Deputy Election he had submitted in Cochinchina an application for naturalisation. Cochinchinese authorities rejected this application on the basis that his renunciation 'already gave him the rights he solicited', inadvertently admitting that his renunciation was equal to French citizenship.⁴⁵⁰ The Supreme Court's ruling of 1889 echoed the point made earlier by Adicéam when it drew a parallel between the effects of renunciation for natives of French India and the naturalisation available to Vietnamese:

The Indian after his renunciation, like the Annamite after his naturalisation, being subjected to the civil status and the political laws of the French, and no longer merely as a French subject protected by treaties or local decrees, but as

⁴⁴⁸ VNA2 Goucoch IB.29/233: Supreme Court of Appeal ruling, 29 July 1889.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.; see also Girault, *Principes*, p. 566.

⁴⁵⁰ Clairon, *La renonciation*, p. 53.

a French citizen...has the right to claim his place on the electoral list in all the territories of France, where the legislation gives electoral rights to French citizens and naturalised French citizens.⁴⁵¹

Recognised as French citizens, renounced Indians therefore had the right to vote as French citizens in Cochinchina.

For a decade following this decision, renouncers voted on par with other French citizens in Cochinchina. But renouncer voting rights were called into question once again when electoral colleges in French India were reorganised in 1899. For local councils in French India, electoral colleges were reduced from three lists to two, with renouncers (barring some exceptions) placed back among the 'native' voters.⁴⁵² Shortly after the changes in French India were approved, Indochina's Governor General Doumer wrote to the Minister of Colonies to express his concern that renounced Indians in Cochinchina were included on a 'a single [electoral] list on which were registered without distinction the Europeans, descendants of Europeans and naturalised *Annamites* and Chinese'.⁴⁵³ He reasoned that as the renouncers in their country of origin were now 'on the same footing as the non-renouncers' for local council elections, they should be similarly 'assimilated' in Cochinchina, and be barred, like non-renouncers resident in the colony, from voting in local council elections.⁴⁵⁴

The Minister, in his reply, broadly agreed with Doumer that some change was probably now necessary to the electoral law in Cochinchina.⁴⁵⁵ However, rather than approving any change, he placed the decision in the hands of the Supreme Court. Doumer nonetheless proceeded to send instructions to the Lieutenant Governor of Cochinchina, Picanon, to bar renouncers from participating in local elections in Cochinchina. The situation of renouncers 'should not, in my opinion,' he emphasised, 'be more favourable outside of their own country'.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵¹ VNA2 Goucoch IB 29/233: Supreme Court of Appeal ruling 29 July 1889.

⁴⁵² Girault, *Principes*, p. 568; Clairon, '*La Renonciation*', p. 96.

⁴⁵³ ANOM GGI50927: GGI to MMC, 12 April 1900.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.: MMC to GGI, 12 July 1900.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.: GGI to Lt GCCH 23 September 1900.

These instructions passed through Picanon to the Mayor of Saigon (now Paul Blanchy) where they met with resistance. Blanchy refused to comply, protesting that renouncers' French citizenship had already been recognised.⁴⁵⁷ Yet while Blanchy resisted, Picanon was particularly persistent in attempting to eliminate Indians from political life in Cochinchina. After the mayor's refusal to follow his instructions, he issued an order which, while noting that the changes in French India applied only to local elections, drew the conclusion that, 'renounced Indians originating from the French Establishments in India and domiciled in Cochinchina have no right to be registered on electoral lists established in the latter colony', suggesting they were to be barred from all elections, both local and legislative.⁴⁵⁸

As far as the political rights of renouncers were concerned, the Supreme Court was to have the last word in this struggle between the rule of law in France, and the ability of French officials in Cochinchina to decide for themselves what was best for the colony. A Supreme Court decision, of 13 May 1901, ruled that the restrictions imposed by the system of electoral lists in French India applied only to that colony. 'Elsewhere in French territory', as described by Clairon, 'and notably in Cochinchina, the *hindou* who has renounced his personal status has the right to be registered on the electoral lists as a French citizen'.⁴⁵⁹ The participation of renounced Indians in Cochinchinese elections was now firmly established and would not be contested again until the Vichy-supported government stripped renouncers of their citizenship (though it would be restored again later) during the Second World War.⁴⁶⁰

The 'legend' of Indian voters: A powerful but malleable force

Through to the Second World War, the electorate of renounced Indians in Cochinchina gained a reputation as a group willing to vote *en bloc* for the candidate who presented them with the most attractive favours. In her 1937 book *French Indo-China*,

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.: Saigon Mayor Blanchy to Lt GCCH Picanon, 11 January 1901.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.: Order of Lt GCCH, 1 February, 1901.

⁴⁵⁹ Clairon, *La renonciation*, p. 103; See also Girault, *Principes*, p. 420.

⁴⁶⁰ Marius, 'Les Pondichériens', p. 394.

the British journalist Virginia Thomson claimed the Indian French citizens formed , 'a large slice of an exceptionally venal electorate'. She even claimed that, 'while some of them are Catholic', the 'Muslims and Hindus' who formed the majority pretended, 'through a remarkable industry in counterfeit papers...to be French citizens,' and to thereby influence the elections.⁴⁶¹ The legend stretched as far as talk of boatloads of Indians being sent out from Pondicherry to Cochinchina expressly for the purpose of voting. The notion that French officials engaged in 'importing natives from French India' to vote was one of the main characteristics of Cochinchinese elections that the American commentator Winnacker noted in his 1938 analysis of elections in the French colonies.⁴⁶² In a recent work of Vietnamese history, Ho Tai too has maintained, in reference to the 1919 Deputy elections, that, 'as usual, some French electors imported boatloads of Indians with French citizenship from the French Territories of Pondicherry and Chandernagore to make absolutely sure that their man would win'.⁴⁶³ If hard evidence exists of either 'counterfeit' renunciations, or of Indians being 'imported' for Cochinchina elections, I have been unable to find it. It is undeniable, however, that French Indians became a political force who, when they acted together, had the power to determine the outcome of a given election.

Part of the strength of Indian voters lay in the sheer force of their numbers which, albeit modest, became meaningful when compared to the population of naturalised French and French of metropolitan origin in the colony. Renounced Indians registered on Cochinchina's electoral rolls always managed to make up a sufficient proportion of the electorate to influence the outcome of an election. Figures for 1922 show that there were about 2000 (male) French citizens eligible to vote. Of these, 700 were renounced Indians, a mere 350 were naturalised Vietnamese (or Chinese). The remaining 1000 Frenchman, from the Metropole and other colonies, could not be relied on to be present in the country on a given polling day.⁴⁶⁴ In this situation it is easy to see how a candidate could find renouncers to be powerful political supporters, should he manage to capture their loyalty

⁴⁶¹ Thompson, *French Indo-China*, p. 172.

⁴⁶² Winnacker, 'Elections in Algeria', p. 277.

⁴⁶³ Ho Tai, 'Politics of Compromise', pp. 387-388.

⁴⁶⁴ 'La Question Indienne', *La Tribune Indigène*, 30 December, 1922.

as a group. The yawning gap between the power of Indian French citizens as voters in Cochinchina, and the almost non-existent political participation of Vietnamese in the affairs of their own country is a topic in itself, which I take up in Chapter Seven.

A further reason why the Indian electorate in Cochinchina became an appealing *coterie* for some politicians was the way in which it provided a foil for exploiting weaknesses intrinsic in Cochinchina's political institutions. Claims to support principles of equality and justice dear to the Metropole, and dear to so many renouncers, could go hand in hand for Cochinchina's politicians with cynically building a compliant base of voters. Politicians use of Indian voters to exploit weaknesses in the system is illustrated in the harsh criticism Governor General Paul Doumer reserved for Cochinchina's Colonial Council. His critique casts in a different light his eagerness, which we saw in the previous section, to bar renounced Indians from voting for the Colonial Council and other local assemblies following changes to electoral lists in French India in 1899. Doumer claimed in the same period that of 2000 French citizens in the colony, 1500 lived off of the budget raised by taxes in the colony. As one of the main functions of the Colonial Council was to vote on how the budget was to be spent, 'a majority of agents whose salaries were paid out of the budget decided on the expenditures to be made and decided on the level of taxes to exact'.⁴⁶⁵ Without entering too deeply as yet into the lack of Vietnamese political representation, it is worth adding the succinct comments of De Lanessan, another former Governor General, whose analysis was similar to Doumer's:

As it is currently made up, the Colonial Council represents not the taxpayers [who contribute to the budget] but just about exclusively the functionaries, entrepreneurs and merchants who consume the budget...thus we can define [the Colonial Council as] ...an elected assembly which pays its electors with the money of those who cannot elect it.⁴⁶⁶

According to Doumer's view of him, Saigon's Mayor Paul Blanchy, (who appeared in his resistance to Doumer's order as a righteous defender of equality), was using the Indian electorate to milk this system and held most of the electorate of Cochinchina in the palm of his hand. Blanchy was in the same period head of the

⁴⁶⁵ Camilli, *La représentation*, p.115 [quoting Paul Doumer's *Indo-chine française*].

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.118.

Colonial Council and had, Doumer claimed, expressly given subordinate posts in the administration and the municipal police force to 'three hundred French negroes (*nègres*)' with the purpose of making of these 'blacks (*noirs*)', a 'docile herd', which he 'led to the ballot-box.'⁴⁶⁷

Doumer's overtly racial references to the 'blacks' of India delineate the limits of his respect for Republican principles of equality. They also suggest that the racial prejudices of some Cochinchinese politicians were strong enough for them to forego the political gains to be made in courting the Indian vote. Doumer's analysis of the malleability of Cochinchina's political institutions, however, is a legitimate call to be cautious of those colonial politicians who stridently supported Indian French citizens in Cochinchina. They might be read as enlightened men of moral integrity, but they can also be seen as great manipulators.

Devoted deputies

If members of the Colonial Council secured their seats by keeping functionaries well-paid and in work, then the Deputy in French parliament, in Doumer's analysis, acted as their 'accomplice', drawing his power, too, from advocating in Paris for the rights and needs of those living off of the colony's budget. Two men who represented Cochinchina in the Chamber in Deputies in the twentieth century, François Deloncle (1902 -1910), and Ernest Outrey, (1914-1936), were particularly noted for their support of Indian causes.⁴⁶⁸

François Deloncle was a diplomat by profession who had been sent to India by Jules Ferry in the early 1880s, to study the political situation under British domination. He emerged convinced of the need to expand and reinforce French colonial and commercial interests. This, as he saw it, was a means to counter British imperialism and to oppose the brutality of British rule with the 'democratic ideal' of a civilising respect for men and culture which he felt had been achieved in Pondicherry.⁴⁶⁹ He continued to

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p.116.

⁴⁶⁸ Dates from Government of France, *Historical Database of Deputies in the National Assembly*, at www.assembleenationale.com/historire/biographie/1889-1940.

⁴⁶⁹ Pierre Michel, 'Les Mystifications Epistolaire d'Octave Mirabeau', University of Angers [n.d.], 1-6, pp. 3-4. in www.mcmbres.lycos.fr/fabiensolda.

express his support for colonial expansion as a prominent member of the *Groupe colonial* in the French Chamber of Deputies and he was allied with the moderate left *Gauche démocratique* (closely associated with the *Groupe*) throughout his political career.⁴⁷⁰ A scholar who studied his reports from India has labelled him, 'an ambitious political opportunist', calling his notion of diffusing democracy, 'an ideal too pretty to not be suspect'.⁴⁷¹ Nonetheless, his terms as Deputy in Cochinchina show he supported renounced Indians in their efforts to press the administration for contractual terms which reflected their status as citizens (see the chapter which follows).

Renouncer support for Deloncle is well-evidenced in the description in the Franco-Tamil newspaper *Réveil Saigonnais*, of a banquet held by the banker Ra-Soccalingam in Deloncle's honour in 1910. The banquet took place prior to an upcoming election (which he lost in spite of widespread renouncer support). At the banquet, attended by 'so many Frenchmen of India that it is impossible to name them all here,' Ra-Soccalingam made a speech in which he spoke of, 'all the good deeds that the Deputy of Cochinchina has bestowed with such generosity on the Frenchmen of India', after which he 'raised his glass to the successful candidature of Mr. Deloncle.' For his part, Deloncle, broaching the question of the upcoming election, said:

My unerring devotion to your cause has been known to you for a long time...I have not failed to take the opportunity on any occasion to protest against the numerous injustices of which you have been victim and to defend your rights against your enemies...even before I held the legislative mandate in Cochinchina.

'This is true', paused the author of the piece to comment, '...and we can be assured that no [Indian] voter can forget this in front of the ballot box any more than he can forget that [Deloncle's] competitor, Mr. Pâris, has done nothing'. Deloncle concluded his speech by:

⁴⁷⁰ C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, 'The Groupe Colonial in the French Chamber of Deputies, 1892-1932', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4 1974, 837-866 (p. 859); C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, 'The French 'Colonial Party': its Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885-1914', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1971, 99-128 (p. 110); Government of France, *Historical Database of Deputies*, www.assembleenationale.com/historire/biographie/1889-1940.

⁴⁷¹ Michel, 'Les Mystifications', pp. 3-4.

declaring that he had the firm assurance that the Frenchmen of India would always be loyal to the superior principles of French democracy, this regime of equality which destroys prejudice, turns over the barriers and which Mr. Laporte has spread through the population in India...A Thunderous applause and cries of 'Long Live Deloncle! Long Live Cochinchina!', saluted the speech of this brilliant orator.⁴⁷²

The period in which Deloncle held the position of Deputy for Cochinchina coincided with a time when the debate over renouncers' legal status in the colony was most heated. However, it was the 'perennial Deputy' Ernest Outrey, who was the more avid supporter of Indian causes in Cochinchina, and whose support was even more explicitly connected, until the late 1920s at least, with his success at the ballot box.⁴⁷³

The entire career of Ernest Outrey was spent in the service of the French in Indochina. Entering the Cochinchinese administration in 1884, he worked for a brief spell in the cabinet of Governor General Richaud in Hanoi, and subsequently in the cabinet of the Cochinchinese administration under Danel. His experience in provinces throughout Indochina was broad-reaching: he was administrator of the Cochinchinese provincial town Thủ Dầu Một in the 1890s, he established the province of Djiring in Annam, and was charged by Paul Doumer with founding the seaside town of Cap St Jacques (Vũng Tàu), all before the turn of the twentieth century. Prior to being elected Deputy in 1914 he had served briefly, in each case, as Lieutenant Governor of Cochinchina (1908-1909), interim French resident of Laos (1910-1911) and Resident Superior of Cambodia (1911-1914).⁴⁷⁴ He was allied with the Republican left (*Gauche radicale, Gauche républicaine démocratique*) during his five terms as Deputy for Cochinchina (1914 to 1936).⁴⁷⁵

Evidence of Outrey's efforts to draw attention to Indian causes pepper French colonial archives from Aix to Pondicherry, and beyond to Saigon, Phnom Penh and Hanoi. Although he has been noted for his lack of support for Vietnamese claims to

⁴⁷² All references to this banquet from Rose Quaintenne, 'Banquet donné par M. Ra-Soccalingam en l'honneur de M. François Deloncle', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 16 April 1910.

⁴⁷³ Quote from Thompson, *French Indo-China*, p. 311.

⁴⁷⁴ Brébion, *Dictionnaire*, p. 288.

⁴⁷⁵ Government of France, *Historical Database of Deputies*, www.assembleenationale.com/historire/biographie/1889-1940.

equality or autonomy (Ho Tai refers to him as, ‘ a vociferous champion of colon supremacy’) he was already defending the causes of Indians domiciled in Cochinchina and Cambodia before he became Deputy.⁴⁷⁶ Several of these interventions, on behalf of groups of renouncers engaged in conflict with the administration, are mentioned in the chapter which follows, but Outrey was also prone to writing references to promote the prospects in Indochina for individual Indians. In 1912, he backed the request of M. Alosius Conjonnessamy for a position as an immigration agent in Phnom Penh.⁴⁷⁷ Mouttou, a renouncer and colonist long established in Mỹ Tho, specifically thanked his ‘friend Ernest Outrey,’ when he accepted his Legion of Honour in 1931, for the Deputy’s efforts in obtaining the distinction for him.⁴⁷⁸ And it was Outrey’s recommendation, in 1934, which finally persuaded King Monivong to bestow the title of Honorary Mandarin on Pondicherry businessman and Phnom Penh personality Fortuné Pakiam.⁴⁷⁹

These efforts to garner Indian support paid off, if that is what they were intended to do. From the 1910s until the effects of the Depression began to make themselves felt in Saigon, the Indian French citizens of Cochinchina, with few exceptions, rallied faithfully around their loyal Deputy who was willing, at least prior to elections, to defend their rights as French citizens. The Franco-Tamil newspapers in the 1920s were punctuated around the time of legislative elections with references to rallies held in Outrey’s honour, as much as they were of denunciations of other electoral candidates from whose mouths racial slurs against the Indian population had emerged, or whose losses had been blamed on the pernicious effect of the ‘Indian vote’. As one renouncer put it in later, more cynical times, ‘After each election, it is customary, indispensable even, that the defeated candidate and his partisans console themselves with the thought, ‘It is the fault of the dirty *Malabars*’.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁶ Quote from Ho Tai, ‘Politics of Compromise’, p. 387.

⁴⁷⁷ NAC 34611 Demande de M. Alosius Conjonnessamy, postulant pour le poste d’identificateur à l’immigration, 1912-1913.

⁴⁷⁸ ‘Colonie hindoue fête la Légion d’honneur de M. Mouttou’, *Saigon-Dimanche*, 10 May 1931.

⁴⁷⁹ NAC 24842 Demande formulée par M. Pakiam tendant à obtenir sa nomination à un titre de Mandarin Honoraire; Interview Gabriel Pakiam, Pondicherry, 15 October 2004.

⁴⁸⁰ ‘M. Outrey, les Français de l’Inde ne méritent pas l’affront que vous leurs faites!’, *Saigon-Dimanche*, 21 April 1932.

Renouncer devotion to their Deputy was much evident in a meeting in November of 1919 of the *Union amicale Indo-française* ('Indo-French Friendship Society'). Deputy Outrey was invited to speak by the society just prior to the legislative election in which he ran for a second term. The society's president in his speech profusely thanked the Deputy for a recent parliamentary intervention in their favour. He spoke of the 'esteem mixed which respect and devotion' which 'all those originating from India without distinction, hold for Mr. Ernest Outrey'. With the Deputy election upcoming, the first following peace in Europe, the president made specific reference too, to Outrey's assistance to Indian servicemen, both those resident in Indochina and those in French India, who had been stationed in France during the war. The audience of renounced Indians then listened to Outrey present his electoral mandate. Certain amendments were requested on behalf of the 'French of India' before the meeting closed, reportedly, with cries of 'Long Live France! Long Live Indochina! Long Live India! Long Live Outrey!'.⁴⁸¹

The April election of 1924, in which Outrey secured a third term, was proceeded by his interventions to draw attention to the working conditions of French Indian lighthouse guards in Cochinchina (beginning in early 1923), postmen (from February 1924), soldiers (from March) and interpreters (also from March).⁴⁸² Competing candidate, Paul Monin, was accused in the pages of the *Réveil Saigonnais* of having supported, in his role as a Colonial councilor, a vote to bar any Indian who arrived in Cochinchina without employment, with the sole intention of reducing the Indian majority whose votes he could not hope to win from Outrey.⁴⁸³ Meanwhile, the candidate Augustin Séraphim Foray, who as former mayor of Saigon had proposed the above vote in the colonial council, had lost any Indian support that might have remained for him by letting slip in public that he had resigned from his post as mayor because he had been 'a

⁴⁸¹ All references to this meeting from 'Union amicale Indo-française', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 28 November, 1919.

⁴⁸² 'Les guardians de phare indiens', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 3 February 1923; 'Les guardians de phare', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 15 March 1924; 'Une injustice à réparer', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 25 February 1924; 'Une intervention de M. Outrey', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 20 March 1924; 'Les interventions de M. Outrey', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 5 May 1924.

⁴⁸³ Edouard Marquis, 'La manoeuvres de Paul Monin pour se débarrasser des électeurs de l'Inde', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 1 May 1924.

victim of the *nègres*' (referring to the Indian voters).⁴⁸⁴ Foray then claimed that the new mayor, an avid supporter of Outrey, had granted several posts within the administration to Indians just days before the election.⁴⁸⁵

Outrey managed to secure one more term in the legislative election of 1928. Following the set pattern for both local and legislative elections in Cochinchina through the 1920s, the defeat of Outrey's opponent, Rouelle, was attributed by his supporters to the 'Indian bloc'.⁴⁸⁶ This was despite Rouelle's victory in Saigon's Mayoral election of 1925, in which there were suggestions that he himself had bought the collective support of Indian voters with 'rum' and 'piastres'.⁴⁸⁷

Political disillusion

Despite efforts by the Rouelle camp to discredit Outrey's new term as just another win for the Indian vote, Outrey's star in the eyes of the Indian French citizens was beginning to fade and he could no longer rely on their unequivocal support. The *Réveil Saigonnais*, although measured in its criticism, strayed from its usual effort to rally support behind the chosen 'candidate of the Indians', to admit that renouncers had been divided in their choice.⁴⁸⁸ The *Saigon-Dimanche*, a recently-launched second Franco-Tamil newspaper, expressed more vigorous opposition to Outrey, and threw its support behind Outrey's rival Goudron.⁴⁸⁹ This paper too, though, indicated that renouncer support for Goudron was not unanimous.⁴⁹⁰

In spite of the venom which she otherwise reserved for the Indian community resident in Cochinchina and their role in electoral politics, the journalist Virginia Thompson, in her analysis written in the 1930s, only partially credits the Indian vote as

⁴⁸⁴ Edouard Marquis, 'Le Citoyen Foray se dit victime de nègres et leur manifeste publiquement son dédain', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 30 April 1924; Edouard Marquis, 'Victime des nègres', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 8 May 1924.

⁴⁸⁵ 'Français de l'Inde', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 6 May 1924.

⁴⁸⁶ Le Réveil, 'Politique de Concorde: en tout; la Juste mesure', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 4 May 1928.

⁴⁸⁷ 'La Politique', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 12 May 1925; 'Les Français originaires de l'Inde, fidèles à la parole donnée, voteront en bloc pour les huit membres de la liste Rouelle', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 May 1925.

⁴⁸⁸ Le Réveil, 'Politique de Concorde...', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 4 May 1928.

⁴⁸⁹ 'L'homme d'aujourd'hui: M. Henri Gourdon prend l'avance car son programme est clair et complet', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 12 April 1928; 'Nous voterons pour Goudron', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 12 April 1928.

⁴⁹⁰ 'Les Français de l'Inde vont montré qu'ils sont indépendents', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 22 April 1928.

the source of the Deputy Outrey's long stay in power. The backing of Henri de Lachevrotière was also significant. Perhaps the most active of press barons in Saigon in the 1920s and 1930s, de Lachevrotière used his position for leverage in politics at a time when newspapers began to play an important role in political life for French and Vietnamese as well as resident Indians. Through his newspapers *La Dépêche* and *l'Impartiale*, he assisted in securing Outrey's election through at least three terms from 1919 to 1928.⁴⁹¹ De Lachevrotière was himself no stranger to local politics and the uses of the Indian vote. As a candidate for the colonial council elections in 1926, his electoral list was elected in its entirety in the first round, in the wake of his firm opposition to then Mayor Foray's proposal to control Indian immigration, and amidst accusations from his opponents of Indian vote buying.⁴⁹² 'Through years of journalism', wrote Thompson, 'he has built up a highly personal clientele, mainly among the *Hindu* electorate, through whom he can support candidates of his own choice'.⁴⁹³

Although Outrey managed to secure a final term for himself again in the 1932 Deputy election, the period from 1928 through the 1930s marked a cooling-off period in his relationship with the renounced Indians. There is little indication of the views of those renouncers who continued to back him, although we know that some did so, including the *colon* Mouttou whose Legion of Honour had been gained with Outrey's assistance.⁴⁹⁴ Those who finally turned against their long-standing Deputy, however, appear to have been disillusioned by his business dealings with De Lachevrotière, which ended in an in-amicable parting of ways over De Lachevrotière's take-over of the Deputy's shares in the *Dépêche* on the grounds that 'the ingrate Outrey had tried to oust him'.⁴⁹⁵ This, and the effects of the Depression appear to have exposed to them finally that Cochinchina's politicians, 'only smiled at them in front of the ballot box'.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹¹ Thompson, *French Indo-China*, p. 311.

⁴⁹² H. Ardin, 'Tribune Électorale', *Tribune Indochinoise* [reprinted from *Saigon-Republicain*], 13 October 1926.

⁴⁹³ Thompson, *French Indo-China*, p. 311.

⁴⁹⁴ 'Après le Divorce Outrey - De Lachevrotière', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 28 April 1932.

⁴⁹⁵ Thompson, *French Indo-China*, p. 311.

⁴⁹⁶ 'Considérations pré-électorales d'un Français de l'Inde', reprinted from *l'Alerte* in *Indochine-Inde* (formerly *Saigon-Dimanche*), 22 March 1936.

An article in *Saigon-Dimanche* in 1928 expressed the new tone of scepticism among the Indian community about the faith they had previously placed in their loyal Deputy:

We know that Mr. Ernest Outrey owes a good part of his popularity to voters originating from French India...The loyal friendship of these courageous men has been exploited by him during the election period. He then forgets about them just as he forgets about the other voters.⁴⁹⁷

By the 1930s, the same paper was publishing articles voicing the profound frustration of the renounced Indians with the myth of their venality at the ballot box, and their deep disillusionment with the unwillingness of politicians to do anything - other than make a show prior to election day - to address the plight of Indians in the lowest positions in the administration. Their full French citizenship had never been fully recognised and with the economic crisis their situation had become increasingly insecure.

In the lead-up to the Deputy election of 1932 the editor of the *Saigon-Dimanche*, the renouncer Raoul Vernier, made an attempt to redeem renounced Indians from the 'tenacious and stupid legend' of their electoral venality. He objected to an electoral candidate being put the question, 'Who subsidises your fund for the French of India?', which he took to mean in not so many words, 'Who gives you money to buy the votes of the French Indians?'. Vernier took the opportunity to state, more easily perhaps than he could have prior to the great loss of Indian faith in Outrey, that the French of India voted independently like anyone else:

Let's put an end to this comedy, which has gone on far too long, let's stop it once and for all!...There are exceptions, we will freely admit it. That some twenty or so of the most wretched French Indians, for whom the elections are manna from heaven, a fault which one finds equally among the French from the Metropole and the French of Indochina, vote venally, we will freely admit. But almost unanimously the French of India vote according to their conscience and understand the seriousness of their act when they go to the ballot box.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁷ 'M. Outrey n'a pas payé sa dette aux électeurs français originaires de l'Inde', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 20 April 1928.

⁴⁹⁸ R. Vernier, 'Les Français de l'Inde ne sont pas à acheter : encore la tenace et stupide légende', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 17 April 1932.

In an article which followed some days later, Vernier traced the 'legend' of the Indian vote back to Outrey's first candidature in 1914, blaming the Deputy himself for the legend. This was despite evidence, such as we have seen, of Deputies and local politicians before him nurturing similar relationships with Indian voters.⁴⁹⁹

Though Outrey survived yet again to run another term, by the late thirties scepticism had turned to extreme pessimism for some Indians. One renouncer spoke of the 'state of misery' in which many renounced Indians in Cochinchina found themselves, blaming it on local politicians, 'with Mr. De Lachevrotière at their head', who 'prolong this state of pauperism to exploit it at the moment of the elections'. 'The legislative elections will take place soon', he bemoaned, 'and we will hear nothing but jokes in bad taste addressed to a category of French citizens; the French of India'.⁵⁰⁰

Despite renouncers' later discrediting of him, Outrey's legacy, as much as his vision of himself, lives on in Pondicherry in the form of a house in the 'French' quarter with 'Villa Ernest Outrey' engraved prominently above its front entrance (see Plate 12). The present occupant is the son of the magistrate Henri Saint-Jacques, whose efforts to gain a concession were discussed in Chapter Three. Mr. Saint-Jacques, according to his son, not only admired Outrey for his defence of renouncers' rights in Cochinchina, but had struck up a close friendship with the Deputy. With his term completed in Cochinchina, he had returned to Pondicherry to build a house for his retirement. Having decided to name the new house in honour of Outrey, he wrote to the Deputy to inform him. Outrey thanked the retired magistrate for the compliment by having a marble bust of himself fashioned and sent to Pondicherry. Saint-Jacques' son pointed to an alcove in the wall of the room where we were seated. 'That was the place', he said, 'where we kept my father's bust of Ernest Outrey'. He bemoaned the unfortunate sale, some years ago, of the marble bust, leaving the niche now empty. Yet the legend of the renounced Indian voter

⁴⁹⁹ R. Vernier, 'M. Outrey, les Français de l'Inde ne méritent pas l'affront que vous leur faites!', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 21 April 1932.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Considérations pré-électorales d'un Français de l'Inde', reprinted from *l'Alerte* in *Indochine-Inde* (formerly *Saigon-Dimanche*), 22 March 1936.

memorialised in the not-so-solid presence of Deputy Ernest Outrey is somehow entirely fitting.⁵⁰¹

Conclusion

Virginia Thompson described the electoral imbalance between Indians and peoples native to Cochinchina as 'a practical joke unwittingly perpetuated by the French Revolution'.⁵⁰² Commenting on the state of electoral franchise in France's colonies in 1914, the writer Pierre Mille similarly observed that 'all the electoral legislation of our colonies is made up of inconsistencies and really incredible idiocies'. In Algeria, he noted, the Jews, Maltese and Levantines were all naturalised en bloc in 1871, and thereby given suffrage, but Arabs were not, and were thus unable to vote. Whereas in Cochinchina:

only the whites can vote; the indigenous Annamites, the most intelligent among our native subjects, have no political rights. But '*Malabars*' from our French Establishments in India may go to Cochinchina with their statutes and as a result may take part in elections: an important minority who, most of the time, determine the success of the candidate.⁵⁰³

If a 'negro from Senegal' went to France or India, he continued, he could not vote. But a *hindou* could vote in Senegal or in France. 'Why? No one can ever explain'.⁵⁰⁴

The explanation offered in this chapter is that the renouncers of Cochinchina held their French masters to account on their vague promise that France's Republican values, and the legal right to citizenship in which they were embodied, might extend seamlessly into the overseas empire.⁵⁰⁵ Their efforts did not bear fruit for non-renouncers. But renouncers earned their right to vote on par with Europeans throughout the French empire (ironically it was only at home in French India that they continued to vote in separate electoral colleges).⁵⁰⁶ The renouncers' continuing need for powerful people to help

⁵⁰¹ Interview Antoine Saint-Jacques, Pondicherry, 15 January 2002.

⁵⁰² Thompson, *French Indo-China*, p. 172.

⁵⁰³ Pierre Mille, 'Elections coloniales', *La France d'Outre Mer*, 14 May 1914.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Girault, *Principes*, pp. 54-78.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 566-567.

defend their rights as citizens in French Cochinchina, however, and weaknesses in the political system of the colony, made them particularly malleable in the hands of certain politicians. Some of these politicians appear admirable, at first glance, in their defence of political rights and notions of citizenship free of race, yet ultimately we cannot but question their motives. The hold of the Deputies on renouncer electoral participation was not broken until the 1920s.

The battle of Indian French citizens for their status to be upheld in Cochinchina was fully justified in terms of the principles upon which the Republic claimed to be founded. While it served French deputies well, however, the tremendous strain it placed on the colonial social order did little, as we shall see, to serve the immediate interests of French authorities in the colony in their day-to-day struggles to assert their hold on power.

Chapter Five: Renouncer functionaries and 'European' contractual privileges

Beginning from the 1880s, numerous conflicts arose in Cochinchina over the contractual terms of renouncers employed within the administration. These were mainly about whether Indian employees were entitled to benefits otherwise reserved for Europeans. Although no attempt was made after the 1890s to challenge renouncers' right to vote as French citizens in Cochinchinese elections, these contractual disputes continued.

The Indians' status as French citizens was not denied by the administration, however, across the board. Rather, Indians posed different types of threats to the social order depending on whether they were employed in upper and middle ranking positions, or whether they filled subordinate posts. The upper and middle ranking employees were a risk to French prestige and the ability of the colonial budget to pay for the generous benefits accorded to Frenchmen of metropolitan origin. Their higher levels of French education and their assured handling of French culture, society, and law meant they could generally defend their position within the administration on the occasions it was challenged. These men were able to exploit the divisions between legislators in the Metropole who ardently defended Republican principles, and more pragmatic colonial administrators. They knew they stood a better chance of securing their legal rights as citizens if they could attract and hold the attention of metropolitan authorities and argue their case in law. Yet they could also engage with French rationale used to justify European privilege in the colonies. They could hold their own in debates (usually with officials based in the colony) grounded in ideas derived from the developing (if dubious) social, environmental and race sciences, which emphasised the need to offset the physical and moral fatigue induced in Europeans by expatriation.⁵⁰⁷ As expatriates themselves,

⁵⁰⁷ William Schneider, 'Towards the Improvement of the Human Race: the History of Eugenics in France', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 54, 1982, 269-91. On the wider application of the 'science' of eugenics in late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial societies see Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, pp. 61-67.

these educated Indians could be taken seriously when they put forward ideas about the dangers to which their service in Cochinchina exposed them, even if they did not always win arguments in this vein. Colonial authorities were less convinced, however, by appeals from Indian employees in the lower ranks for conditions which reflected their citizenship status. Concessions to these requests, when the Indians worked alongside Vietnamese employees, were politically problematic, and for this reason some renounced. Indians employed by the colonial administration never received contractual privileges which matched their French citizenship.

Debates over the status of Indians within the Cochinchinese administration provide us with a valuable schema of the reasoning used over time to justify European privilege in French Cochinchina. The maintenance of a superior status for Europeans, and thereby of European prestige, has been studied for French Indochina, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, primarily in relation to *métis* populations. These studies contend that the growth of a population of mixed race was instrumental from the latter half of the nineteenth century in establishing 'boundaries of rule' which separated the colonisers from the colonised and thereby preserved the privilege, prestige and power of the latter.⁵⁰⁸ My research concurs with these studies in finding that the late nineteenth century marked a hardening of European attitudes. However, there were other forces besides the growth of a *métis* population which led colonial masters to change their approach. The conflicts incurred by the presence of within the Cochinchinese administration of Indians with French citizenship is proof that the contexts within which 'European' privilege had to be justified and defended were more complex.

The demarcation of 'boundaries of rule', moreover, was never firmly racial, nor was it ever consistent. These boundaries were more permeable than is often imagined,

⁵⁰⁸ On Indochina specifically see Emmanuelle Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie: les métis de l'empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté*, Paris: La Découverte, 2007; Christina Elizabeth Firpo, 'The Durability of the Empire: Race, Empire and 'Abandoned' Children in Colonial Vietnam 1870-1956', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 2007. For an analyses which includes Indochina but is more weighted towards the Dutch East Indies, see Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, especially pp. 79-111. See also articles in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds), *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998, and for British India, Lionel Caplan, *Children of Colonialism. Anglo-Indians in a Post Colonial World*, Oxford: Berg, 2001, especially pp. 1-15, 59-85.

and were the subject of constant renegotiation. Racial prejudices held by French authorities of European origin clearly played a part in prompting them to question why Indians in the administration should be treated on par with their European colleagues. However, to claim that colonial privilege was accorded solely on racist grounds is to gloss over the complexity, both of the workings of power within the French colonial administration and of the implementation of the rule of law in the colonies.

'European' agents and the badge of assimilation

Indians were hired on European terms and wages in the Cochinchinese administration even before they had gained the right to 'renounce' and make legal claims to French citizenship. Their right to pay and privileges at 'European' levels, like their right to vote, was never questioned in the early days, presumably because they possessed skills and qualities which the French administration urgently needed.

The first complaints made by Indians employed in the Cochinchinese administration arose in the early 1880s. They were not based on claims that renouncers had not been given contractual terms to match their citizenship status. Rather the Indians, most of whom had yet to renounce their personal status, complained that privileges freely accorded to them as 'European' status employees were now being taken away. Their claims prompted French authorities to oblige all non-European employees who enjoyed European privileges (including Indians, mixed-blood créoles from France's other overseas possessions, and some Malays and Japanese), to obtain legal proof of their European status. Naturalisation became legally possible in Cochinchina, as did renunciation in French India, in 1881, in the very same year that the controversy discussed in this section began. In this case these instruments of assimilation, rather than being doors through which natives could be allowed to enter into European civilization, became required as necessary badges which those who had already acquired some of the appearance, behaviour and privilege of the assimilated were required to wear in order to justify their privilege. This is in keeping with Osborne's claim that naturalisation not only 'confirmed French policies of assimilation' but 'reflected other more utilitarian

motivations'.⁵⁰⁹ From this perspective, the introduction of naturalisation and renunciation laws was seized upon by the Cochinchinese administration as a means to correct anomalies it had already created and allow it to justify the privileges of its 'European' employees.

In the mid 1870s, a generous supplementary pension fund (*caisse de prévoyance*) was established for functionaries within the Cochinchinese administration. Arthur Girault, the principle analyst of French colonial law, praised it for attracting to Cochinchina 'functionaries markedly superior to those serving in other colonies'. The fund, financed by the local budget, entitled each functionary to tens of thousands of francs after twelve years' service, a 'small fortune' in Girault's estimation.⁵¹⁰ It also protected wives and families who could receive payments if the employee should die before serving out his twelve years. The pension was justified as compensation for the hardship suffered by those serving in Cochinchina. As one Indian public servant described it, the fund served 'to recognise by an extraordinary allocation the sacrifices of all kinds imposed upon agents of the local service in Cochinchina who must make their careers in this colony, and notably the risks they run to their health'.⁵¹¹

Initially reserved for those working within the Department of Native Affairs, the pension was extended to other categories of public servant in 1876 but the benefits were maintained within the ranks of those agents classed as 'European'. The pension was again extended in May of 1881, this time to lower-ranking functionaries, or 'inferior agents' (*agents inférieurs*). This category of employees included those in positions classified as 'European' as well as those classified as 'native'. Apparently in an effort to make clear that those employed on 'native' terms were excluded, an article stipulated that 'agents of Asian origin' were not eligible.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁹ Osborne *French Presence*, p. 126.

⁵¹⁰ Girault, *Principes*, p. 123.

⁵¹¹ VNA2 SL2582 Liquidation de compte de prévoyance de M. Adicéam, comptable du 2^e classe, 1888: 'Mémoire tendant à l'admission des Indiens agents au service locale en Cochinchine, au bénéfice du compte de prévoyance', signed Adicéam, 3 March 1888.

⁵¹² Ibid.

It could be taken as a simple oversight that the authors of the decree failed to notice that many Indian employees, technically 'of Asian origin', were already employed, and had in some cases been employed for many years, as 'European' agents. Their access to the pension fund had not until now been questioned. However, authorities acted upon the ambiguous wording of the decree to deny the pension to their Indian employees. The controversy called into question other 'European' privileges these intermediaries had quietly enjoyed.

Not long after the decree came out, Indians employed in the administration 'on European terms' petitioned the Minister of Colonies to protest their exclusion. That petition, unfortunately, has not survived, but the grounds on which it was rejected are provided in a letter from the Governor of Cochinchina to his superior in Paris.

The Governor's reasoning drew on somewhat inconsistent ideas about the propensity of different peoples to adapt to new locations. Special provisions were not required for Indian functionaries serving in Cochinchina, he claimed, because the climate into which they were being introduced presented no danger to them. 'The situation of Pondicherry and Saigon with respect to latitude and climate', he claimed, was 'almost identical'. Moreover, the Indians retained a 'material way of life which does not differ in any visible way between the two countries'. By contrast (and here he slipped from using a logic of environmental and cultural adaptation to one of racial determinism) 'the créoles from other colonies live like the Europeans' and merited 'European' treatment because 'they have the same needs'.⁵¹³

Moreover, the Governor argued, rather than being excluded from (French) privilege the category of Indians who benefited from European salaries was already overly privileged. 'In effect, Indians do not spend more than *Annamites*. An [Indian] employee of the first category whose annual income is from 800 to 1000 francs does not have any more expenses than a native agent at 760 piastres'.⁵¹⁴ This idea, that the

⁵¹³ VNA2 SL2362 Compte de Prévoyance: concession du compte de prévoyance aux fonctionnaires et employés originaires des Établissements français de l'Inde: GCCH to MMC, 27 October 1882.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

Indians' situation was comparable not to that of Europeans but to that of the indigenous Cochinchinese was a view which colonial authorities more generally found to be more comfortable.

Despite his paternalistic claims to be protecting the rights of *Annamites* against the undue privileges of Indians, ('If the Indians are reputed to be French citizens, the *Annamites* are our subjects and also have a right to our beneficence'), it was clear that the real risks underlying the affair were political, as well as fiscal. The problem was not so much the Governor's claim that *Annamite* and Indian lifestyles were comparable, as that *Annamites* themselves would make these comparisons:

If we grant payments from the pension fund to [Indians] already two or three times better paid than the natives and who do not contribute as they do to municipal and public charges and who do not participate in paying taxes, there would be no reason to refuse the same benefit to the latter.⁵¹⁵

The Governor's mention of taxation is significant. It points to one of French Cochinchina's inherent weaknesses and one of its great injustices. Fiscal shortfalls were a continual concern of the colony, always pressed to be economically self-sufficient, and its indigenous people were themselves made to pay for the privileges enjoyed by those brought in to rule over them. 'European' functionaries, Indians included, who did not participate in paying taxes, drew these generous pensions and other benefits from the pockets of *Annamite* taxpayers. Yet if the Governor did not spell this out, the Minister of the Navy and the Colonies firmly grasped the immediate risks implied. In his reply to Cochinchina's Governor he agreed that 'to admit [Indian agents] to the benefit of the pension fund would lead, logically, to inviting native agents to participate, and would result for the colony in a considerable and unjustifiable expense'.⁵¹⁶

One Indian employee to question this decision was Mr. Cherubin Guanadicam Adicéam. Adicéam was among the first young recruits from Pondicherry to work in the developing administration in Saigon, arriving there in 1868 to fill a clerical post with the

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.: MMC to GCCH, 9 March 1888.

Department of the Interior. He was employed from the beginning on European contractual terms. When in 1885 he requested the liquidation of his pension fund from the administration after seventeen years of consecutive service, he was rejected on the basis that he was classed, by virtue of the decision of May 1881, as a functionary 'of Asian origin'.⁵¹⁷

Adicéam's challenge to the administration is of note because of the way it was organised, and the style and force of his arguments. These factors are all telling of his cultural competence in French. He possessed a sophisticated understanding of French administrative and political procedure, and sharp rhetorical skills which, once he had reached an attentive audience, enabled him to undermine the reasoning of those who opposed him.

Adicéam wrote a petition which was allowed to pass up through the administrative hierarchy because of support from his superiors in Saigon. They were clearly appreciative of his work. Transmitting Adicéam's lengthy memorandum to the Director of Local Services, his immediate superior emphasised that 'through long and excellent service, Mr. Adicéam deserves the benevolence of the administration'.⁵¹⁸ Adicéam then hired a lawyer from Paris, 'to enlighten the Department on the situation of the Indians'.⁵¹⁹ 'As this doctrine of the Cochinchinese Administration did not seem to me to conform to the spirit of the decree of 4 May 1881', he claimed, 'I addressed myself, through hierarchical channels to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, the third of March last [1888] to incite an interpretation of the...said decree'.⁵²⁰

In his memorandum, Adicéam subverted the arguments put forward by the Governor of Cochinchina some years' earlier. In so doing, he demonstrated how colonised people, as much as their colonial masters, bought into popular versions of prevalent social theories and could shape these ideas to their own purposes. Adicéam

⁵¹⁷ VNA2 SL2582 Liquidation de compte de prévoyance de M. Adicéam, comptable du 2^e classe, 1888. I suspect he was the same Adicéam referred to in Chapter Four, but his first name in some sources has been incorrectly recorded.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.: Adicéam to Director of Local Services, 6 October 1888 [note in margin].

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.: Adicéam to Director of Local Services, 6 October 1888.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

implicitly accepted the Governor's proposition that the physical environment from which colonial functionaries originated had a bearing on how well they fared in the Cochinchinese climate. He also accepted the notion that the privileges enjoyed by Europeans in the colonies were intended to cushion them from the risks to which they were exposed. However, he disagreed with the Governor that India's climate could be equated with that of Cochinchina:

The Governor of Cochinchina put forward the opinion that the climate of Pondicherry offered the same insalubrious character as that of Cochinchina and that the acclimatisation of the Indians to this latter colony posed no danger... These judgements are erroneous, and it is certain that from the study of medical reports of the two colonies, would emerge a complete difference of climate. It is in effect no secret that Pondicherry, which enjoys a dry, albeit hot climate, is a clean city. We cannot say as much of Cochinchina.⁵²¹

Through this manoeuvre, and using the Governor's own reasoning, Adicéam cleverly placed the expatriated Indians on a similar footing to that of their European colleagues serving overseas.

Not only did Indians, like Europeans, suffer the physical effects of Cochinchina's climate and environment. From a cultural perspective, Adicéam argued, the Indians' indigenous habits were different (and, he implied, cleaner) than those of the Vietnamese. To the Governor's claim that 'the eating habits of Indians were not costly', Adicéam replied: 'On the other contrary, the Indian diet, inexpensive in India, must be the same as that of Europeans in Indochina at the risk of intestinal problems that do not spare anyone not belonging to the yellow race'.⁵²² The expatriate Indians' cultivation of European habits ('One must add that the agents of the local administration, although Indian, all dress themselves and their families included in European dress') brought their claims to special privilege even further in line with that of the Europeans (see Plate 13).⁵²³

Although Adicéam had renounced his personal status on 5 November 1881, not two months after the law had been put in place in French India, he did not rely on legal

⁵²¹ Ibid.: 'Mémoire tendant à l'admission des Indiens agents au service locale en Cochinchine, au bénéfice du compte de prévoyance', author Adicéam, 3 March 1888.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

claims to citizenship to argue that he qualified for French privileges.⁵²⁴ Instead, he drew on a more ambiguous piece of legislation. He interpreted the presidential order of 1871, which distinguished peoples to whom the *Annamite* legal code applied from those subject to French legislation, as proof that Indians had been legally ruled in Cochinchina to be more like the French than the *Annamites*. The decree itself was grounded in notions of who was able to easily acclimatise to, or assimilate with, the Vietnamese, and who was not. Adicéam was quite willing to use this line of reasoning to justify placing other Asians among the 'Asian agents' within the administration. Those who were intended to be included under the term 'Asian agents', he maintained, were only the 'Annamites, Chinese, Malays and Cambodians', who were already 'acclimatised or are easily acclimatised, having lived in the Colony prior to the French occupation'.⁵²⁵

Adicéam closed his petition by claiming the root of the problem was an error in wording on the part of lawmakers. Indians were not meant to be included in the term 'agents of Asian origin', but taken the 'presence of a large number of Asians of diverse nationalities' who could be placed in the category of those assimilated to the 'natives', 'the writer preferred to use a generic expression in which the literal sense surpassed his thinking'.⁵²⁶ Although both parties dressed their arguments in the social theory of the day, his opponent's racist undertones were not lost on Adicéam. He concluded: 'It is regrettable that the French administration enters into the examination of the skin colour of its agents, in order to resolve a financial problem'.⁵²⁷

De Laporte, the (recently appointed) Minister of the Navy and Colonies, accepted Adicéam's argument. The pension fund, he determined, was 'reserved for certain categories of French functionaries, without distinction of origin'. 'As a consequence', he found, 'agents in the local service who originate from French India must, although

⁵²⁴ Ibid.: Note from Head of Service, 9 March 1888.

⁵²⁵ ANOM FM Indo NF164 Relations Extérieures, Statut des Etrangers. Rapport du GGI sur le statut personnel des étrangers en Indochine 1908.

⁵²⁶ VNA2 SL2582: 'Mémoire...', author Adicéam, 3 March 1888.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

'Asian' in the literal sense of the word, be considered to have access to the pension fund'.⁵²⁸

Despite this decision, the local administration did not move quickly to implement it. A letter Adicéam wrote two months' later indicated that he was aware the matter had been decided in his favour ('my lawyer recently informed me') and the decision had now been made public but Cochinchinese authorities had yet to act.⁵²⁹ The delay was evidence of a further complication. The Cochinchinese administration had in fact responded to the ministerial orders by issuing a circular to all departments. It stated that 'Indians without distinction of origin, as well as other Asians not properly belonging to Indochina' were now entitled to the pension fund, and requested all of its offices to draw up a state of 'all Asian personnel (Indian or otherwise)' who were now eligible'.⁵³⁰

Replies to this circular reveal how departmental heads took it upon themselves to interpret these orders. While the administration had requested a full list of Indians in their employ, the departments without exception carefully excluded any Indian employed 'on native terms' (*à titre indigène*). As the head of the Post and Telegraph office explained:

Although some Indians and Chinese are employed in my administration as postmen, I did not think it possible to put them on the list [of those eligible for the pension fund] as they are treated with regards to benefits and pay in the same way as their native colleagues and in the same rank.⁵³¹

It is a reflection of the informality with which European privileges were granted to non-Europeans in the early days of colonial rule in Cochinchina that some higher level administrators do not even seem to have been aware of the fact that there were Indians hired on 'native' terms, as well as those employed on 'European' contractual terms. When the Treasury reported as 'nil' the number of Indians in its employ, for example, it was noted, 'and yet there are Indians who are tax inspectors'.⁵³² This sufficiently

⁵²⁸ Ibid.: MMC to GCCH, 21 August 1888.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.: Adicéam to Director of Local Services, 6 October 1888.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.: undated circular (late August 1888).

⁵³¹ Ibid.: Director Postal services to Director Local Services, 23 October 1888.

⁵³² Ibid.: Note, 5 November 1888.

confounded the Director of the Interior that a discussion in the Colonial Council suspended pay-outs from the pension fund to Indians until a solution could be reached. The Governor General wrote to Paris seeking clarification and a notice was placed in the *Journal Officiel*: 'all decisions of this nature are suspended until the arrival of the solution requested by the Department on the 27 of January 1889'.⁵³³

A letter from the Governor General to Paris early the following year, seeking clarification, suggested that authorities in Saigon, as much as their leader in Hanoi, really had no idea what was intended by the Colonial Minister's earlier instructions. They were cautious about all possible interpretations though, and made anxious by fiscal pressures. The Governor pressed the Minister to 'please examine whether there is reason to be concerned, as the commission thinks there is, about the size of the expense that would entail the payment of the pension fund to all Indians holding the title of employee on European terms.' 'If your response is in the negative,' he continued, 'please advise us as to whether Indians serving 'on Asian terms' should also be eligible'.⁵³⁴

This affair made problematic the privileges some Indian employees enjoyed within the administration, and revealed a further troubling distinction between different Indians within the service, but it also drew attention to similar problems posed by non-European and *métis* employees. Having asked about the proposed status of Indians in his letter to the Minister, the Governor General went on to inquire whether he should include in the benefits of the pension other Asians who were not of Indochinese origin, such as 'Malays, Japanese, [and] Tagals'. Similar to the Indians, they occupied, 'some European jobs' with no legal proof of their 'European' status necessary. So too did Cochinchinese *métis*:

There are also several *métis* of French men and *Annamite* women; some of them, legally recognised by their fathers, are eligible without question for the pension, whereas two others whom their fathers have neglected to recognise, have been excluded...both serve as agents on European terms. As the appearance and attitude of each of them does not reveal anything of their

⁵³³ Ibid.: excerpt *Journal Officiel*, no date.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.: GGI to MMC, 29 January 1889.

semi-Asian origin, they both insist upon being put in possession of their dues from the pension fund.⁵³⁵

Any pretension on the part of Chinese employees to privileged status was more easily dismissed. 'I exclude the Chinese', he added, 'who can be assimilated with the natives of the colony'.⁵³⁶

The Minister's reply, which was not written until the first of April, stated that his ruling was intended to permit only the natives of French India employed in Cochinchina on the same level as Europeans, and not those hired 'on Asian terms', to access the pension fund.⁵³⁷ By the time the Minister's decision reached Hanoi, however, the fund in its entirety (rather than just the Indian drain on it) had been judged an excessive strain on local finances, and a 'general liquidation' had been declared.⁵³⁸

The resolution of outstanding Indian claims on the pension fund shows how proof of renunciation began to be required of Indians working in the administration in order for them to justify their claims to European privileges. With the first general pay-out from the fund in April 1889, Indians employed in the administration on 'European terms', such as the lighthouse guards Michel Samy, Joseph Gézegabel and Emmanuel Lazare, were granted the sums due to them.⁵³⁹ A year later however, the Pension Fund commission was making payments to Indians from the fund only if the claimant could provide proof of renunciation. François Dourressamy, employed in the Public Works Department, had taken the trouble to arrange a proxy to renounce for him in Karikal in February of 1889. He was not granted his four thousand francs in pension, under his new name of Mr. Marius, until this act of renunciation could be produced.⁵⁴⁰ Other Indian employees, however, were resentful, and perceived that renunciation was being forced upon them. When payments to Lambarre, (another lighthouse guard), and the accountant Rattinam were suspended pending the production of their acts of renunciation, they protested:

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.: MMC to GGI, 1 April 1889.

⁵³⁸ Girault, *Principes*, p. 124.

⁵³⁹ VNA2 Goucoch 2413 Liquidation des comptes de prévoyance de MM. Brun, Samy, Joseph, Lazare, 1889.

⁵⁴⁰ VNA2 SL2415: 'Analyse de l'affaire', 20 May 1890.

These employees, who do not want to renounce their status, told me that these documents were not previously requested in similar circumstances from many of their compatriots and that it had been sufficient only to prove that they were natives of the French Establishments in India. They protested against the decision taken today with regard to them...that imposes on them a renunciation, a measure that was not taken with respect to their predecessors.⁵⁴¹

Other non-European employees engaged 'on European terms' also began to be asked for proof of naturalisation at this time.⁵⁴² Some, like the Filipino Ciriaco Villaruel, had similar reactions to Lambarre and Rattinam. Villaruel indicated that naturalisation, now presented to him as a necessity, was not something he had ever actively sought:

Despite my lack of naturalisation, I find, by virtue of my settling here which goes back twenty-four years, that I have adopted Cochinchina as my second home...I must admit...that I have never aimed to be naturalised. With little knowledge of the law, and working always far from Saigon, I came to know only recently that this formality was necessary.⁵⁴³

I have been unable to trace the existence of any regulation that firmly marks this change in policy. However, another reference dating from 1890 indicates that, for those contracted on 'European' terms, renunciation had become necessary to hold their posts. Appavou, an employee in supplies in Saigon, mentioned in a petition to the Minister of Colonies in 1890 that his renunciation was 'indispensable...to the exercise of my employment for which it is one of the conditions stipulated by the Government'.⁵⁴⁴

The supplementary pensions affair resulted in the rationalisation of contractual privileges within the Cochinchinese administration. Renunciation became compulsory for Indian employees of the Cochinchinese administration (as did naturalisation for their Asian peers) if they wanted to maintain the European contractual privileges they had already been granted. The affair, however, by no means put to rest debates over

⁵⁴¹ VNA2 SL2412: Director of Public Works to GCCH, 22 May 1890.

⁵⁴² VNA2 Goucoch 2413 and VNA2 SL2412 include cases of Japanese employees with French naturalisation.

⁵⁴³ VNA2 SL2415: Ciriaco Villaruel to GCCH, 25 January 1890.

⁵⁴⁴ Appavou, *Absurde Renonciation*, p. 7.

'European' benefits within the administration. Local authorities made attempts to undermine the European privileges of some Indian employees, while others, those hired on 'native terms', now began to seek for themselves better contractual conditions.

Troubles with 'native status'

While it became necessary by about 1890 for all Indians employed in the Cochinchinese administration on European contractual terms to 'regularise' their situation by renouncing their personal status, by the start of the twentieth century virtually every Indian functionary employed 'on native terms' had also chosen to renounce (in my research I have encountered no exceptions). In addition to this, some administrators within the Cochinchinese local service appear to have reacted to the supplementary pensions affair, and the securing of privilege to Indians with 'European' contracts, by merely changing the terms of their Indian employees' contracts to 'native' ones where they felt their European privileges were not merited. Problems arose from both situations, centred around complaints that Indians who were French citizens had to settle for 'native' terms of employment.

In the 1900s two groups of Indians protested against the terms of their treatment as employees of the Cochinchinese administration. The first were postmen of Indian origin who continued to be contracted on 'native' terms even though they had all renounced and were thus French citizens. The second group was made up of Indian tax inspectors (*porteurs de contraintes*). Again, all were renouncers. The tax inspectors positions were previously classified as 'European', but had been downgraded to 'native' contractual status as soon as the Indians were hired.

Both of these contractual disputes took place shortly after the right of renouncers to participate on par with metropolitan Frenchmen in Cochinchinese elections had been confirmed (1901). The central role played by the Deputy for Cochinchina in defending these voters against injustice was therefore perhaps no accident, but rather an early manifestation of a pattern which was to become more familiar. The Deputy concerned, however, was remarkably timid in his appeal and only partially effective. He appeared to

lack conviction himself that these men, who were clearly not of the 'educated classes', had any claim to the privileged status of Frenchmen other than their basic loyalty to France.

In early 1903, Cochinchina's Deputy François Deloncle wrote to bring the 'miserable' and 'precarious' situation of Indian postmen in Saigon to the attention of the Governor General of Indochina. Deloncle noted that a recent reorganisation of the postal service had made no mention of the eleven Indians employed there. He asked that they be given privileges closer to those enjoyed by European employees, rather than the native entitlements which they received. The postal service did not employ any Europeans as postmen, with whose situation new terms for the Indian postmen might be equated. However, Deloncle's request included some of the basic benefits enjoyed by employees under 'European' contract. These included a salary fixed in French francs, the right to administrative leave after three years of service, rights to travel in a higher class and to be admitted to better hospitals, and access to a pension.⁵⁴⁵

Deloncle backed his request not by emphasising the postmen's legal status, but by pressing arguments about their greater loyalty, in comparison to the Vietnamese, to the French cause. With the expansion of Saigon, it was desirable to expand the number of Indian postmen with whom 'the security of correspondence and professional discretion' could be assured. These were qualities of which, in his view, 'too many [Cochinchinese] natives are still incapable'. He cited an incident which took place in Sóc Trăng in 1901, in which a Vietnamese postman passed a letter from the Public Prosecutor to a third party before delivering it to the lawyer to whom it was addressed. The Deputy insisted:

This could most certainly never have taken place with a *Hindou* postman. The *Hindou* postman, upheld by a strong sense of duty, and envisioning the penalties to which he would be exposed would never transgress the obligations of his work.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ ANOM, GGI4073 Au sujet de la situation des postiers Hindous à Saigon 1903: Deputy Deloncle to GGI, 2 January 1903.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.: Deputy Deloncle to GGI, 2 January 1903.

The Governor General rejected Deloncle's request by arguing that there were cultural similarities between the Indians and the *Annamites* which made the Cochinchinese environment less physically taxing for the Indians than it was for Europeans. He dismissed the postmen's request for longer leave on the grounds that 'the way of life of these employees is essentially the same as that of the *Annamites*. Furthermore, there was no need for the Indian employees to be paid in francs as the piastre was stable. Granting such a request risked leading to similar demands from the Vietnamese employees, who, like the Indian postmen, received a salary in piastres.⁵⁴⁷

That privileges extended to Indian employees 'would not fail to be noticed by the natives presently serving in the diverse services of Indochina' was the political crux of the issue. The risk of bringing injustice to the *Annamites* by favouring the Indians was a theme which had been raised before. But if a worry was expressed during the supplementary pensions affair that Vietnamese employees would compare their situation to that of the Indians, in this case the concern was more immediate. Unlike Adicéam and other Indians employed on 'European' terms, the Indian postmen worked alongside Vietnamese colleagues who were employed under the same terms to do precisely the same work.⁵⁴⁸ The fear of problems arising from the favouring of one group of postmen over another was therefore very real. In the minds of their employers, granting European privileges to Indians employed in these lower ranks of the service was very hard to justify.

Despite his only partial success with the postmen's claim, Deputy Deloncle was called again in 1906 to defend the interests of Indians employed in the Cochinchinese administration. This time it concerned the three tax collectors employed within the Treasury, all of whom happened to be Indian. Acting upon a petition sent to him by the men, (Marie Dessaints, Gnanamouttou Lannes and Gnanapregassame Dessaints – the petition unfortunately could not be traced), Deloncle called on their behalf for the repeal of a decision of 1894 which had downgraded their employment from 'European' to

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.: GGI to Deputy Deloncle, 3 April 1903.

⁵⁴⁸ See for example ANOM GGI17248 Au sujet des agents de police indiens citoyens français de la ville de Saigon, 1910: 'French citizens of Indian origin' to Deputy Deloncle, 11 April 1907.

'native' status. This had come about because Europeans had initially occupied the three posts of *porteurs de contraintes* in the colony, 'but later the Indians were named as such'.⁵⁴⁹ Once Indians came to occupy all of these posts, the terms of employment had been changed accordingly, despite the fact that all three had renounced.

The tax inspectors' affair is a case study in how status problems were created in the administration even as attempts were made to resolve them. The source of these problems can be traced back not just to the hiring of people who were of Asian origin on contractual terms labelled 'European'. The types of 'European' positions into which Indians were hired also created difficulties. Some such positions required higher levels of French education. In general, these positions also invested the employee with the power to oversee Vietnamese subordinates. In these cases the fact that the Indians were not racially 'European' could be compensated for by their education, which had imparted them with some of the manners of Europeans. They could behave passably, some even commendably, as Frenchmen. As Deputy Deloncle pointed out in a later petition, such men usually found that '[their] quality of French citizens [was never]...contested'.⁵⁵⁰

Other 'European' positions, however, required similar legal guarantees, but did not require the same levels of education. The Franco-Tamil press would term such employees in the 1920s the *petits fonctionnaires*, the lesser functionaries; one commentator in the early 1930s called them the 'European bureaucratic proletariat'.⁵⁵¹ These posts were classified as 'European' solely because the post holder held the power to oversee Vietnamese or act against Europeans, and not because a high level of French education was required. The lower ranks of policemen, bailiffs, and the tax inspectors we discuss here were all in this category. The 'European' status of other subordinate administrative posts (such as prison guards and lighthouse keepers) was grounded in little more than the need for political loyalty among these employees. Their utility as intermediaries, and European hesitation to take up such posts, meant that Indians tended to carve out niches of employment in these lower status 'European' positions. At the

⁵⁴⁹ ANOM GGI3761 Situation des porteurs de contraintes originaires de l'Inde Française 1906: Deputy Deloncle to GGI, 17 May 1906.

⁵⁵⁰ ANOM GGI17248: 'French citizens of Indian origin' to Deputy Deloncle, 11 April 1907.

⁵⁵¹ Suignard, *Les Services Civils*, 154; 'Les interventions de M. Ernest Outrey', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 5 May 1924.

same time they greatly troubled the French administration when they were employed there. Indian *petit fonctionnaires* tended not to possess the cultural competence which might have offset the fact that they were not of European origin. As a consequence, the rights of this group of Indian employees to European privileges were more regularly called into question.

The Indian tax inspectors had, as Deloncle claimed, 'the power to press charges even against Europeans'.⁵⁵² Thus when French authorities acted on their conviction that these relatively humble employees did not deserve European privileges, they created an awkward situation in which people classed as 'natives' had powers over Europeans. One wonders why it was felt these particular Indians could stand equal to, or even above Europeans when it came to chasing them down to pay their taxes, when their right to merit 'European' contractual benefits was questioned. It was a question Deloncle raised himself. If the Indian tax inspectors were permitted to have powers over Europeans, 'is it not' he wrote, 'because, like them, they are part of the electorate ? In that case why this anomaly...which classes them in the category of natives?'.⁵⁵³

The way in which Deloncle emphasised the electoral rights of the renouncer tax inspectors may have been a case of too baldly stating his own interest in their welfare. It went somewhat further, however, than his defence of the postmen in that it included at least some legal claim to back the Indians' complaint. That he made no mention of their civil rights as citizens, however, is telling of the timid way in which the Deputy approached the defence of men who were less well assimilated and certainly not of the 'educated classes'.

Deloncle's own underlying conviction that the tax inspectors, albeit French citizens, were not equal to their metropolitan counterparts emerges in his bid to the Governor General on their behalf. The Deputy's request, as well as the Governor's handling of the complaint, were based on now familiar ideas of the Indians' ability,

⁵⁵² ANOM GGI3761: Deputy Deloncle to GGI, 17 May 1906.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

relative to Europeans, to acclimatise in Cochinchina. Using this reasoning, they negotiated a compromise which effectively created an intermediate level of privilege for the Indian tax inspectors.

The benefits which Deloncle requested on the tax inspectors' behalf approached but were not equal to those of their European colleagues. Although Deloncle claimed they could not make ends meet with this wage, he argued only that their wages, which had been paid in local piastres since 1894, should be fixed once again in French francs. As 'native' employees, the tax inspectors had been treated at *Cho Quan*, the Vietnamese hospital in Cholon, where they had experienced, in Deloncle's words, 'moral suffering'. His request to have them admitted to military hospitals would have seen them treated alongside a lower class of Europeans. The only privilege requested on par with metropolitan Frenchmen was to shorten their length of service to three years, because the six years they currently had to serve were 'long days for a foreigner in the colony'. 'This is what contributes', he claimed, 'to the high rate of mortality of Indians in the colony'. He also requested access for them to a non-native pension.⁵⁵⁴

The Governor General permitted the tax inspectors to be paid in francs and actually granted them a small raise. Due to the fact that they were only three claimants, as he stated himself, fiscal circumstances permitted the latter generosity. They were accepted into the same military hospitals used by soldiers, sailors and other subordinate French agents. But they were only granted a local pension and their request for more frequent leave was rejected on the basis that they could last longer in the Cochinchinese climate than Europeans. 'These three agents originating from French India have certainly no need of leave as frequently as functionaries coming from France. The climate is for them less new and less dangerous'.⁵⁵⁵

Colonial authorities found it easier to dismiss the claims of Indian functionaries who, albeit renouncers, had lower levels of education and lower social standing than elite Indian recruits, and were less sophisticated and less persistent in their approach to

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.: Note [n.d.].

conflicts with the administration. Neither postmen nor tax collectors, nor some other groups of Indian employees who were among the *petits fonctionnaires* of the Cochinchinese administration were ever given contracts which recognised their French citizenship. Some such men however, found better-placed renouncers willing to help them champion their causes. The next section, on the subject of Indian policemen in Saigon who were French citizens, demonstrates how a wider community of renouncers participated in an organised, high profile, and highly effective campaign to right injustices brought upon their peers within the municipal police service.

The campaign to defend Saigon's Indian policemen

The most forceful and successful of campaigns led by renounced Indians in Saigon to have their civil rights upheld in Cochinchina was a protest against changes in the terms of employment of Indian policemen within the Saigon Municipal police force. The affair was characterised by Indians organising themselves beyond the confines of the police force in order to make their grievances known. Claiming to represent a wider community of Indians in Saigon, they displayed a solidarity that crossed class, educational, and professional boundaries. They took their complaints to high offices in Paris where they managed to raise the debate above the level of locally-based arguments about acclimatisation. Styling themselves Cochinchina's 'Indian colony', they emerged not only as defenders of Saigon's policemen, but as colonial defenders of the Republic, pressing French legislators to recognise their citizenship as a universally applicable right.

The conflict began in January 1907 when policemen employed in the Saigon police force protested against a move by a new municipal government in the city to deprive the fifty-seven Indian agents in the force, all of them renouncers, of privileges due to them as French citizens. This marked the nadir of administrative manoeuvres to create categories of Indian agents increasingly separate from and inferior to their European colleagues. When the ranks of personnel within the municipal police force was formally organised for the first time in 1897, Indians had begun their employment in a 'superior cadre', reserved exclusively for Indians, which consisted of three subordinate

ranks (classes five, six and seven). Despite relegating them at the beginning of their careers to the status of trainees, this arrangement nonetheless gave them European privileges such as a pension, and indemnities for travel and lodging. Most importantly it permitted them to be promoted to the ranks properly labelled 'European', (classes one through four), working alongside and with the same privileges as their European peers. A decision aimed at creating a completely separate 'Indian cadre' was drafted in November of 1906. This would have excluded them from European privileges and would have prevented them from being promoted into European ranks.⁵⁵⁶ It was never implemented, renouncers were later to claim, because of concerns within the municipal government that it would infringe upon the citizenship rights of the renounced Indian policemen.⁵⁵⁷

It was an attempt on the part of a new municipal government to re-introduce the 'Indian cadre' proposed in the decree of November 1906 which led to resistance from the Indian policemen. By 20 January 1907, when they were called in to sign their payslips under the new conditions, they had already hired a lawyer. On his advice they proceeded to sign the slips, adding 'commitment not binding' (*sous toutes reserves*). A week later the municipal government made the minor concession of changing 'Indian cadre' to 'special superior cadre'. This was no more than a cosmetic change, and a poor, if not laughable, effort to reassure the Indian policemen that they were not being classified on the basis of their origins. The proposed contractual arrangements remained unchanged, and consisted of the withdrawal of what had already been an only partial accord of 'European' status. The payslips were returned to the Indian policemen with orders to cross out their offending sentence, write 'barred three words nul and void' and sign again. Their refusal to do so led to their pay being withheld and one Indian agent, the sub-brigadier Saint Louis, being brought before an inquiry and demoted for insubordination.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁶ ANOM GGI17248 Au sujet des agents de police indiens citoyens français de la ville de Saigon, 1910: Municipal Commissioner Duranton to GCCH, 10 November 1907.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.: Pamphlet, 'La Question des Agents de Police originaires de l'Inde française à Saigon', 'Avis', Minister of Colonies – *Comité Consultatif des Contentieux*, 30 March 1908.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

In April, by which time the Indian policemen had continued to work without pay for three months, a group of 'French citizens of Indian origin resident in Cochinchina', wrote to Deputy Deloncle to protest at the situation. Their letter laid out in strictly legal terms the cause of their complaint. Their renunciation, the petitioners maintained, constituted 'a form of naturalisation'. Proof of its applicability in Cochinchina, and here they quoted the legal commentator Girault, was that the Supreme Court of Appeal had recognised the right of renouncers resident in Cochinchina 'to be registered on the electoral lists alongside other citizens'. The court had already acknowledged that there could be no such thing as, 'an Indian form of [French] nationality...which conferred lesser rights'.⁵⁵⁹

Not only did the 'French citizens of Indian origin' firmly establish their legal right to claim the same contractual privileges as Europeans. They issued a bold warning to the Metropole that French colonial rule - in whose Republican values they claimed to share - risked failure through the mediocrity of the (metropolitan) agents charged with its execution. The warning came in the form of an unyielding attack on the 'abuses of authority' on the part of the official behind the offending decree. This was Duranton, the president of the recently formed Municipal Commission, an administrator of metropolitan origin who had long served in the residence in Hue prior to his transfer to Cochinchina. Mr. Duranton was described in unflattering terms as 'this functionary', who had 'managed despite any real competence to approach the end of his career' and had 'not failed to make a mark in his new position by fantastical whims and acts of unparalleled high-handedness'.⁵⁶⁰ Duranton was berated for his ignorance of metropolitan legislation and for his naivety in thinking that as 'a mere local administrator' he could 'with a stroke of his pen briskly take away the quality of citizen from a population of men who have been long accustomed to this idea that they belong to the great French family'.⁵⁶¹

Extending their implied criticism that Duranton's mediocrity was born of too long a stay in the colony, the Indians proposed that 'political liberties' would similarly

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.: 'French citizens of Indian origin' to Deputy Deloncle, 11 April 1907.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.: 'French citizens of Indian origin' to Deputy Deloncle, 11 April 1907.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

degenerate under colonial conditions unless a watchful metropolitan eye was kept on them. The petitioners requested that the Deputy examine their claim, and urged him to seek from the Minister of Colonies 'an equitable solution in line with the great principles of the Republic too often neglected in 'this Greater France' of Indochina'. A disregard for Republican values in the colonies, they concluded, threatened to erode the same values in the Metropole:

Those who condemn liberal institutions in the colonies forget, as one author said, the lessons of history which show us the development of our colonies stifled in the past by authoritarian rule; the day when political liberties disappear in the colonies, they will be menaced in France.⁵⁶²

Deputy Deloncle did not immediately respond to the Indians' petition. In the absence of any reply or any action on their case, the Indians sent an urgent telegram to three parties (the Governor General of Indochina, the Minister of Colonies in Paris, and to Deloncle in the Chamber of Deputies). 'President of Municipal Commission continues to vex Indian colony in Cochinchina', it read, 'Appeal Justice Minister against abuse of power'. The names of the signatories, Hilaire, Arokiam and Madet were familiar from the April petition.⁵⁶³

This message prompted Deloncle at last to action. He did not merely plead, as he had done in the past, for sympathy for the plight of his Indian electorate. Although following rather than leading his petitioners, he now defended their case solely on the grounds of the legal rights they had acquired. He forwarded the Indian petition of April to the Minister of Colonies. In a letter to the same Minister he described the renouncers as 'French citizens'. Any difference between them and their French colleagues was 'an anachronistic distinction based on a difference of colour and origin, which denies the privileges they have acquired and ignores the principle of the incontestable equality of the rights of citizens enjoying their full civil and political rights and fulfilling their military service'. The latter claim was albeit premature, as citizens residing in the French establishments in India would not be obliged to serve in the French military until a year

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.: Telegram Hilaire, Arokiam, Madet to GGI, MMC, Deputy Deloncle, 22 May 1907.

later (1908). Calling for the Minister to intervene, Deloncle stated hopefully that 'the municipal authorities of Saigon will understand once you notify them that the respect for the equality of citizens before the law is the first responsibility of any French administration'.⁵⁶⁴

The Indian signatories of the petition and telegram were not policemen themselves, but renounced Indians employed outside of the administration in Saigon. Mr. Hilaire was a businessman, and the others were employees of various French firms in the city.⁵⁶⁵ The President of the Municipal Commission was clearly deeply irritated at Indians outside of the administration taking the affair into their hands. Called to respond to the telegram, Duranton initially professed to be unaware of the cause of their complaint:

I have been unable to trace any affair concerning from near or far the named Hilaire, Arokiam and Madit [sic]...I add that these protestors do not belong to the municipal personnel and I do not at all recall having received from them the least claim or verbal communication.⁵⁶⁶

He then admitted, disingenuously, that it might 'have something to do with the measures taken to reorganise the municipal personnel and with matters concerning the police agents originating from India'.⁵⁶⁷

Duranton's reasons for reorganising Saigon's police force were typical of local-level justifications for refusing 'European' status to renouncer employees. Echoing previous administrative conflicts, they were based on Duranton's assessment of how well the men could withstand the trials of the tropical Cochinchinese climate. Between them, the fifty-seven Indian police agents in the service had only taken seven leaves of convalescence in their entire careers.⁵⁶⁸ He took this as 'indisputable evidence' of their ability to 'support the climate' and to 'live here as they do at home'.⁵⁶⁹ Consequently,

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.: Deputy CCH to MMC, 21 May 1907.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.: Indian colony to MMC, 18 June 1907.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.: President Municipal Commission to GCCH, 24 May 1907.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Figures from ANOM, GGI 17248; President Saigon Municipal Commission to GCCH, 7 July 1907.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.: President Municipal Commission to GCCH, 24 May 1907.

rather than the standard European entitlement (three years' service followed by six months' leave) he required Indian policemen to work for five years before being granted leave. This was the Commissioner's own innovation, produced from his assessment of countries which he felt to be the hygienic and climactic equivalents of Indochina. He could, he claimed, have required six years' of service prior to leave for each agent (he appears here to have been referring to the same local regulations against which Indian postmen and tax collectors had been protesting). However, as he had recognised that 'this period was a little long for agents serving outside of their country of origin', he had made applicable in the Municipality of Saigon a regulation for 'personnel born in the French possessions of the Indian ocean' and serving outside their place of origin: 'I estimate that Indochina can be considered to be just as healthy, or just as unhealthy, as Madagascar and other countries included in this category'.⁵⁷⁰

Although Duranton claimed that the Indians' physical ability to acclimatise enabled them to work easily in Cochinchina, he otherwise maintained that for cultural and indeed racial reasons they did not make good policemen. Thus while their physical aptitude was cause to deprive them of European privileges, so too was their supposed moral and intellectual ineptitude. The Indian agents did not speak Vietnamese, he complained, thus they provided, 'an even worse service than their *Annamite* colleagues'. The preponderance of Indians in positions of some authority (the force consisted of ninety-six non-Vietnamese agents, fifty-seven of whom were Indian, and a corps of 160 Vietnamese subordinates) made the whole Saigonese force 'utterly hopeless' in Duranton's estimation.⁵⁷¹ In one letter Duranton made a blanket assessment of the Indian character in which he judged them as no less than racially unfit for the role of policing:

The Indian does not possess, in either moral or physical terms, any of the qualities necessary to assure a police service. Timid and meek of nature, without energy, completely devoid of any spirit of discipline and besides too black, these agents are in no way qualified to exercise their duties.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.: President Saigon Municipal Commission to GCCH, 7 July 1907. It is not clear whether this latter regulation distinguished between those of European and non-European origin.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Ibid.: President Municipal Commission to GCCH, 24 May 1907.

In Duranton's view it was this weak character which caused the Indian agents to lack any authority over either the Europeans or the 'native population' in the city. However, descriptions of interactions between the Indian policemen and the public suggest that notions of racial superiority, coming not only from Europeans but also from indigenous Cochinchinese residents, also played a part. Central Commissioner Belland reported:

The European population is absolutely impervious to any intervention by Indian agents in the disputes which arise daily between themselves and the native population; they can accept even less [Indian] intervention in disputes between Europeans.⁵⁷³

Indian attempts to wield authority over Cochinchinese natives, Belland continued, were even more ineffectual:

The native population, both *Annamite* and Chinese, professes a profound disdain for the Indian race, which they consider to be absolutely inferior; they are generally hostile to all interventions by Indian agents and object to any observation they pass. The natives frequently contest the sincerity of reports that [Indian] agents are called to file during their service, especially when these pertain to questions of hygiene and salubrity.⁵⁷⁴

That Chinese and Vietnamese could take umbrage at Indian policemen's assessments of their levels of cleanliness only confirms what Adicéam's correspondence suggested earlier. It was not only Europeans, but a wider swathe of colonial society which borrowed from environmental 'science' and social theory to forge ideas about its own position in the colonial social order.

It may be noted here that that there is no hint throughout Duranton's lengthy assessment of the 'deficiencies' of Indian policemen, (all of whom would have been ethnically Tamil), that 'martial races' ideology in any way influenced his attitudes. This

⁵⁷³ ANOM FM Indo NF221/1774 La création du cadre spéciale supérieur par le Maire de Saigon M. Duranton, pour les Français d'origine indienne 1907: Central Commissioner to President of Municipal Commission, 12 September 1907 [quoted in Nadia Leconte, 'La migration des Pondichériens', pp. 120-121].

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.: Central Commissioner to President of Municipal Commission, 12 September 1907.

is in contrast to its prevalence in the thinking of so many British colonial officials, both in British India and more widely in the British Empire in the same period.⁵⁷⁵

The Police Commissioner's reports provided further detailed evidence to support Duranton's view of the moral inadequacies of the Indian character. In service reports for individual policemen for the year 1907, as Leconte describes in her assessment of this affair, 'of a total of thirty-four agents classed as 'superior special cadre' only nine satisfied their superiors'.⁵⁷⁶ The Indian agents were consistently described as being 'mediocre', 'worthless', 'apathetic', and 'inebriated'. Frequently accused of not knowing their duties, some were reproached for poor intelligence, while others were reported to be using their cunning to avoid punishment. The label 'Indian agent' stood alone in some reports to indicate a lack of aptitude.⁵⁷⁷

Even the more positive reports on certain Indian policemen read half-heartedly. Agent Louis was 'an Indian agent for whom I have neither good nor bad to say. An agent without great value'. Jean Belvindrassamy was 'a reasonably good agent, though lacking in zeal'. Even though, as Belland commented, Agent Thiroux's 'professional worth is equal or superior to that of the best of his colleagues':

He has done nothing to my knowledge more than the others. He is the same as the majority of the Indians, beneath the duties he is assigned. Charged 25th June last with tackling a horse which had broken its foot, he handled the task so badly and so slowly that he did not put the injured beast out of its suffering until two hours later, and after having shot it five times in the head.⁵⁷⁸

Whether this picture of an inept Indian police force was in any way grounded in truth is hard to substantiate. In a letter to the Governor of Cochinchina dated July 1907, (thus seven months since the dispute had begun), Duranton claimed that in the preceding six months, only one of twenty-nine disciplinary punishments meted out to police agents had

⁵⁷⁵ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, esp. pp. 71-78.

⁵⁷⁶ Leconte, 'La migration des Pondichériens', p.122.

⁵⁷⁷ ANOM FM Indo NF221/1774: Relevé des notes obtenues par les agents de cadre spéciale supérieur de la Police Municipale pendant l'année 1907.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid..

been given to a European.⁵⁷⁹ A further petition issued from the group of Indian French citizens sought to correct this view of Indian incompetence, instead naming 'prejudices of colour and race' as one of the driving forces of the administration. Such prejudices, more than real incompetence, could account for the inordinately high number of punishments given to Indians. The protestors disclaimed the report that Duranton had furnished in early July in which he 'did not cease to find faults and defects with the Indians'. In an attempt to redress the balance they enclosed an account of services rendered and acts of courage by Indian policemen. The list of twelve Indian policemen who had received mention for services rendered went back to 1887. It included Lamartine who had 'discovered a gambling house' and 'speaks very good Vietnamese', and Enock 'who had stopped a bolting horse attached to a carriage in which there was a European woman on her own'.⁵⁸⁰

In this new petition, the renounced Indians now referred to themselves as the 'Indian colony' (*colonie indienne*, or *colonie hindoue*). This title underlined their quality not as 'natives' but as Frenchmen, albeit of Indian origin, acting alongside other French colonisers. This 'Indian colony', moreover, now sought to defend its reputation not only within the administration, but to the wider public. The account of the good deeds of Indian policemen contained in the petition appeared in modified form as an article in the local French-language press, with Hilaire credited as its author.⁵⁸¹

The theme of Indian French citizens being used to manipulate electoral politics, so familiar from the previous chapter, is not absent from this affair. In the same petition, the Indians berated the Central Commissioner Belland for acting in bad faith by producing such poor assessments of the Indian policemen. They suggested he was driven in his actions by electoral reasons:

It is quite curious to find that this same Commissioner had previously furnished laudatory reports on the very Indian agents whom he disparages today and treats

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.: President of Municipal Commission to GCCH, 26 July 1907.

⁵⁸⁰ ANOM, GGI17248: Hilaire, Madet et al. to MMC, 18 June 1907.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.: Pamphlet entitled 'Ce qui se passé au Colonies, les Immortels principes!: La question des Indiens Citoyens Français en Cochinchine'.

as incapable, for the simple reason that they did not want to cede, at the last election, to administrative pressure.⁵⁸²

The clear suggestion was that Belland had pressed his Indian employees to vote for a particular candidate. Dismayed when they did not comply, he turned against them. For his part, Belland maintained that many Indian agents had only been given positions previously in the municipal police in return for votes. Roch, an Indian agent included in his reports, was revoked in 1904 for 'having been found, while in service, in a state of absolute drunkenness, acting eccentrically and threatening passers-by with his sabre which he had unsheathed'. Despite this he was reintegrated in 1906, 'for electoral reasons, along with many other Indians'.⁵⁸³ Duranton went so far as to claim that the 'special cadre' created for Indian police agents back in 1897 was instituted as 'a measure of good politics and for electoral reasons', to please the Indians by avoiding the term 'native' or 'Asian' for their rank.⁵⁸⁴

Duranton had held the Indian sub-brigadier Saint Louis responsible for the collective insubordination of his colleagues on the grounds that he was the highest ranking of the Indian police agents. Although he had been reprimanded and demoted in March of 1907, the legality of this decision continued to be questioned. When Duranton requested the Cochinchinese Governor's approval of his decision in early April, the colony's Private Council (*Conseil privé*) advised that Saint Louis was no more to blame than the others, and the Governor had agreed. Both Council and Governor judged that the Indian policemen had made a mistake by not going through the proper hierarchical channels to transmit their complaints. However, as this error was a minor one, the policemen should be given no more than a simple collective reprimand. Duranton did not heed this advice and by August Saint Louis was still, 'in service on the pavements', rather than carrying out his desk duties, in league with European colleagues of his rank, as a head of station.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸² Ibid.: Hilaire, Madet et al. to MMC, 18 June 1907.

⁵⁸³ ANOM FM Indo NF221/1774: Relevé des notes obtenues par les agents de cadre spéciale supérieur de la Police Municipale pendant l'année 1907.

⁵⁸⁴ ANOM, GGI17248: President Municipal Commission to GCCH, 10 November 1907.

⁵⁸⁵ VNA2 Goucoch 1A.17/092 (12) Au sujet du brigadier Saint Louis 1907: Verbal Record (*procès verbale*), 2 August 1907.

The high point of the Indian policemen's dispute came when sub-brigadier Saint Louis was brought before a hearing of the Municipal Commission. Held on 2 August 1907, the inquiry appears to have been arranged by Duranton as a means to lend an air of legality to his earlier arbitrary decision.⁵⁸⁶

Although the Commission exonerated its President Duranton, the Saint Louis inquiry ultimately worked in the Indians' favour. It provided a platform for the legal nature of the policemen's complaint to be firmly stated, and it assisted, rather than prevented, the affair from growing beyond the bounds of the administration. Early in the proceedings, the metropolitan lawyer who had been hired to advise the Indian policemen over the contractual dispute spoke forcefully in their defence. 'French citizens', he claimed, 'cannot be divided into two categories'. So too did Joyeux, a dissenting member of the Commission. He questioned whether not only Saint Louis' demotion, but the decree itself (of January 1907) which sparked the affair by creating a 'special superior cadre' was legal at all. All Municipal decrees required approval by the Governor of the colony and this had not taken place. He also spoke out against the Municipal Commission's disregard for the Indians' French citizenship:

[The Indian policemen] have been called to cast their vote in the ballot box, and to participate in the public life of the country, and they find themselves suddenly relegated to a special category. We say to them: 'You are Indians and you will remain Indian, that is to say in an absolutely inferior class; you will not be allowed to take our superior positions'. And they are to accept this without uttering a word?⁵⁸⁷

For their part, hostile members of the Commission continued to be disturbed that the affair had reached beyond the confines of the administration. Saint Louis was made to answer whether he had addressed himself to newspapers, local societies, or the League of Human Rights – all charges which he denied. He equally denied having written to friends or colleagues in France about the matter.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.: Note 'Administrator fulfilling the function of joint inspector' to GCCH, 24 September 1907.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.: Verbal Record (*procès verbale*), 2 August 1907.

These members' concern to reveal Saint Louis' acts of insubordination only served to heighten Joyeux's criticism of his colleagues' colonial provincialism. He maintained that they had used methods long outdated in the Metropole, of seeking out scapegoats to serve as an example. One commission member in particular, a Mr. Burguez, was singled out with a by now familiar method of critique. Drawing an implicit parallel with the notion that one's health could degenerate in tropical climes, Joyeux proposed that his colleague's intellectual and moral fitness was similarly affected by too long a stay in the colony:

We can see that Mr. Burguez has been here for a long time...that he has not left for a long while; if he had taken the air of France he would see that we have abandoned these outdated procedures applied in the past to regiments and colleges.⁵⁸⁸

Despite this spirited defense of the case, Saint Louis' demotion was approved by the Commission by a majority of five votes to three. Two of the five votes against Saint Louis were cast by Vietnamese members of the Municipal Council. One of the two councillors was none other than Huỳnh Tịnh (Paulus) Của, one of the best-known Francophile Vietnamese intellectuals of the time. Neither of the two councillors was a French citizen. In a memorandum sent to the Minister of Colonies following the vote, the 'Indian colony' claimed that as 'mere French subjects' the Vietnamese councillors were 'not competent to understand questions involving the civic rights of a certain category of citizens'.⁵⁸⁹ The renouncers' reaction to the participation of the two men in the ruling drives home the extent to which they eagerly threw themselves into the project, for themselves, of creating a seamless empire of French citizens. They could resemble their peers of metropolitan origin only too well in that they were sometimes unable to treat the Vietnamese as anything more than mere 'natives'.

We have no record of any Vietnamese response to this particular challenge. The words of Pétrus Ky, another noted francophile intellectual, ('remain Annamites since we

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ ANOM GGI17248: Pamphlet, 'La Question des Agents de Police', p. 5.

are born Annamites; I do not see any utility in being naturalised'), had apparently been invoked, however, when the Vietnamese councillors were attacked on an earlier occasion for not having sought naturalisation.⁵⁹⁰

Rather than settling the problem, the effect of the vote in the Municipal commission was to make the 'Indian colony' of renouncers even more vocal, and unified, in their outrage against Duranton and the Municipal Commission. A weighty pamphlet by the 'renounced Indians of Saigon' was published some days after the Saint Louis decision. It was sent to the incoming Lieutenant Governor of Cochinchina, Bonhoure, to inform him of the situation, and was apparently also distributed publicly. The pamphlet included an 'exposé of the facts' to date, and cuttings from the local French press on the affair.⁵⁹¹

Added to this came support from renouncers of high standing in both Saigon and Pondicherry. Just days after the Municipal Commission's ruling, Ra-Soccalingam, the banker and president of the Syndicate of the Frenchmen of India (*Syndicat des Français de l'Inde*), wrote to the Lieutenant Governor asking him to re-examine Saint Louis' case and the offending decree, and to 'join his efforts with those of the Deputy of the colony, Deloncle, to protect [Indian French citizens'] rights'.⁵⁹² By September, Louis Rassendren, representative of the 'renouncers of Pondicherry' (he had assumed the position following Laporte's death) was writing appeals to the Minister of Colonies and to the Indian Deputy and Senators in Paris, in support of fellow renouncers in the police service in Saigon.⁵⁹³

Efforts at publicity, but mostly appeals to high offices in the Metropole can be attributed with bringing the affair to a close favourable to the Indians. In a letter to Godin, the Senator for India, the Minister of Colonies noted the many letters of protest Godin had forwarded in relation to the Indian policemen in Saigon. The Minister had

⁵⁹⁰ This took place in 1906 but Osborne does not describe the cause or source of the attack. Osborne, *French Presence*, p. 128.

⁵⁹¹ ANOM GGII7248: Pamphlet 'Ce qui se passé au Colonies'.

⁵⁹² VNA2 Goucoch 1A.17/092 (12): President Syndicate Frenchmen of India to GCCH, 7 August 1907.

⁵⁹³ ANOM FM Indo NF221/1774.

requested a report from Hanoi as a result. Then, in order to 'give to this affair a solution in keeping with our principles of colonial law', he had asked the Colonial Administrative Tribunal (*Comité Consultatif des Contentieux*, situated in Paris) for its judgment.⁵⁹⁴ On 30 March 1908, the Tribunal ruled in the Indians' favour. It stated unequivocally that renounced Indians were to be legally recognised as French citizens:

Indians who have renounced their personal status are governed by the civil and political laws applicable to the French; this legal assimilation is in itself the consequence of the quality of French citizen which the *Hindou* renouncer acquires *ipso facto* by the fact of his renunciation.⁵⁹⁵

It also stated that this status was not fixed to locality, but that a renouncer could exercise these rights:

wherever he wishes, as shown notably for the Indian renouncers established in Cochinchina...as a consequence the Indian renouncers, French citizens, have the same access to posts, the same administrative aptitudes as those of French origin and have the right to be subject ...to the same regulations.⁵⁹⁶

The ruling went on to reach to the very root of the renouncers' difficulties with regard to their civil and political rights in Cochinchina. While the Metropole had the power to change the terms of the law, local governments did not:

Acts emanating from Metropolitan agencies invested with legislative powers in colonial matters (laws or decrees) can alter the principle of civil and political equality granted to *Hindou* renouncers by the legal prescriptions of the decree [*décret*] of 21 September 1881. By contrast, decisions [*arrêtes*] emanating from local authorities cannot call these [legislative] decisions into question at the risk of violating the law.⁵⁹⁷

For these reasons the Tribunal judged that the decision issued by the President of the Municipal Commission of Saigon in January 1907, that created for Indian police agents a

⁵⁹⁴ ANOM GGI17248: Pamphlet, 'La Question des Agents de Police', Minister of Colonies to Senator India, 29 April 1908.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.: Pamphlet, 'La Question des Agents de Police', 'Avis', MMC – *Comité Consultatif des Contentieux*, 30 March 1908.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

‘superior special cadre’, ‘violated the civil and political equality that the decree of 21 September 1881 establishes between those of French origin and *Hindou* renouncers’.⁵⁹⁸

Just over a week later, the Governor General in Hanoi received a telegram informing him of the ruling and instructing him to revoke Duranton’s decision.⁵⁹⁹ In an indication of how heated the issue had become for renounced Indians in Saigon, the Governor General proceeded cautiously, asking the Lieutenant Governor of the Colony (now Ernest Outrey) for ideas as to ‘how this measure might be applied without provoking protests, and with as much consideration as possible for the position of Duranton’.⁶⁰⁰ How Duranton might cope with the withdrawal of his decision was suggested in a letter from the Minister of Colonies to the Governor General. Although ‘the Indian police must from now on be treated on the same equal footing as their European colleagues’ it was nonetheless:

up to the president of the Municipal Commission of Saigon, as he has stated at many points; if the service of the Indian agents does not satisfy him, he should not recruit them in future or should not give promotions to those who are not as yet in the upper ranks and who do not appear to him to be capable of reaching them.⁶⁰¹

The delay in revoking Duranton’s offending decision with regards to the Indian policemen only succeeded in heightening already raised emotions. Outrey was obliged to publicly release the information that a new decision was being prepared, for fear that withholding it might be seen as an electoral move directed by the Deputy Deloncle.⁶⁰² Just before the new decision was approved, the ‘Indian Colony’ sent a urgent plea to the Governor General, saying the Minister’s order to revoke the decision had arrived in Saigon four months ago and the delay was ‘provoking great emotion among us’.⁶⁰³ Finally, however, four months later, Duranton’s offending decision was eventually

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.: Colonial Administrative Tribunal to GGI, 9 April 1908.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.: Telegram GGI to GCCH, 9 April 1908.

⁶⁰¹ ANOM GGI 17248 (C2 (34)): Minister of Colonies to GGI, 28 April 1908.

⁶⁰² Ibid.: Telegram Outrey to GGI, [n.d.].

⁶⁰³ Ibid.: Telegram Indian Colony to GGI, 20 July 1908.

replaced by a new one which eliminated the 'special superior' cadre and placed Indian policemen within the ranks of European personnel.⁶⁰⁴

This was an important legal victory for renouncers in Cochinchina. It recognised that their civil and political rights were applicable throughout the French empire, and could only be altered through legislation in France, not by colonial authorities. Despite this victory, the Minister of Colonies' passing advice to Duranton, to avoid hiring or promoting Indians if he judged their capacity to be lacking, was to be taken up as an ambiguous means to circumvent the legal obstacles which the Metropole placed in the way of those wishing to suppress the role of Indian French citizens in Cochinchina.

Informal exclusion and the persistence of 'native cadres'

Despite the successful campaign on behalf of the Indian policemen, and although the post-World War One period saw a rapid rise in the number of Indians employed in middle-level positions in some areas of the administration (the judicial service for example), disputes between Indian employees and their superiors did not grind to a halt. The nature of Indian exclusion nonetheless changed somewhat. Apparently in an effort to side-step the metropolitan reprimand warning the local administration that it must comply with the republic's rule of law, Cochinchina's local administration now refrained from hiring renouncers into the more problematic of 'European' ranks, or promoting those already employed there.⁶⁰⁵ Despite this new emphasis on the rule of law, the struggle between metropolitan principles of rule and colonial pragmatics did not abate. Local authorities never fully accepted that the less educated of their Indian employees had the right to European terms and privileges, and they continued to employ, or even downgrade, certain Indian agents to 'native' contractual terms. By the 1920s, however, the wider context had vastly changed. Political pressures to open the lower ranks of the administration to Vietnamese, and economic pressures then brought by the depression to

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.: GGI to MMC, 12 August 1908.

⁶⁰⁵ For Governor General Klubowski's attempts to keep Indians out of the Cochinchinese administration circa 1910, see ANOM GGI17248: 'Indian Colony' to GGI, 30 September 1910; Telegram MMC to GGI, 25 October 1910; Telegram GGI to MMC 26 October 1910; Telegram GGI to Lt GCCH 24 October 1910; and Telegram Lt GCCH to GGI 25 October 1910.

eliminate some cadres altogether pushed the principled question of the citizenship of the 'proletariat' of Indian functionaries far to one side. The issue changed from one of defending their legal rights and privileges, to the more fundamental question of retaining their posts.

A petition issued at the end of the First World war by renouncers complaining about their conditions of employment in Cochinchina brought to light the administrative practices both of side-stepping the law to exclude or keep back certain Indian employees, and flouting it in the case of others. By now Ernest Outrey had been elected Cochinchina's Deputy, and he read the statement before the Chamber:

In the deployment of our activity we come incessantly up against the indifference and sometimes also the bad faith of many representatives of authority, sentiments which [amount to] a systematic rejection of the majority of our requests for work in the public administration of the colony [and] hurtful allusions to our origin.⁶⁰⁶

Lending his support, Sarraut commented in a request to the Governor General Albert Sarraut:

Numerous Frenchmen of India have for some time been excluded from public positions and many of them are only admitted to serve on Asian terms, even though they are French citizens...they protest against this exclusion and demand to be treated on the same footing as other French citizens resident in Indochina.⁶⁰⁷

In his response, Sarraut boldly sanctioned the idea that renouncers were not to be treated as full citizens unless they could display outward signs of French cultural assimilation. Differing levels of education and, by implication, manners and behaviour, he maintained, were acceptable sources of disparity in the contractual arrangements of Indians employed in the administration. He pointed to the example of two Indian clerks who had recently been hired on 'European' terms, with benefits 'in perfect equality' with those of other French citizens. He insisted that those renouncers who were 'in the educated classes, and of course with the same qualification, diploma or knowledge' as

⁶⁰⁶ ANOM FM Indo NF329 La situation des travailleurs Indous en Indochine 1919: Chamber of Deputies Parliamentary report 3rd session, 27 March 1919.

⁶⁰⁷ VNA1 C.01/443 Recrutement des citoyens français originaires de l'Inde résidant en Indochine 1919.

French from the Metropole 'always benefited in Indochina from a treatment based on principles of the strictest equality' with their European peers.⁶⁰⁸

Outrey's complaint, in Sarraut's view, applied only to those in the administration who were 'relatively few', but their exclusion was justified because they were not possessed of 'a sufficiently high level of culture or professional instruction'. He admitted that some were employed as Asian cadres. This, however, was because they were 'agents almost completely illiterate and who, despite their quality of French citizen, cannot for reasons of their insufficiency be admitted to serve on the same level as European agents'. Moreover, most were aware of and accepted this situation. He cited the example of Mr. Gnanadican, employed in Annam on the railways on 'Asian terms'. Described as 'illiterate' and 'incapable', although honest, 'M. Gnanadican appears to be happy with his present situation and does not aspire to an equality of treatment that he knows he does not merit'.⁶⁰⁹

Indians who were not deemed sufficiently cultivated or educated were kept in the lower ranks of 'European' cadres', or moved, if colonial authorities could get away with it, out of those ranks altogether. In 1923 Deputy Outrey brought a complaint before the Minister of Colonies on behalf of Saigon's older Indian policemen (in the lowest 'European' ranks of the service) who were being bypassed for promotion by younger European employees.⁶¹⁰ In the same period, Indian interpreters in the judicial service, although all renounced, were still hired as native cadres.⁶¹¹ Five renounced Indians serving as ticket inspectors for the railways and originally hired on European terms, were downgraded in 1924 to native salaries, although they continued to have leave entitlements 'on European terms'.⁶¹² Another problem revealed at this time was the practice of keeping Indian employees in temporary employment for long periods of time. When lighthouse keeper Mr. L. died in 1929 at his post at Can Gioc, he had served thirty

⁶⁰⁸ ANOM FM Indo NF329: GGI to Minister Colonies, 7 September 1919.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ ANOM FM Indo NF158 Rapport du Gouverneur Générale de l'Indochine au ministre des colonies sur le statut personnel accordé aux diverses catégories d'étrangers en Indochine 1908: Deputy Outrey to MMC, 18 October 1923.

⁶¹¹ 'Les interventions de M. Ernest Outrey', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 5 May 1924.

⁶¹² 'Une injustice à réparer', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 25 February 1924.

consecutive years (since 1899) at the same lighthouse as a day-labourer (*à titre journalier*). Although the terms of his hire were ostensibly 'European' he had served the full thirty years without paid leave or pension.⁶¹³

Despite continued disregard for the citizenship rights of renouncers in the lowest status administrative positions, there is little evidence after the turn of the twentieth century of renouncers at the other end of the social and educational scale protesting about their contractual terms. By this we understand that the elite, better-educated Indians remained relatively secure in their employment. They would undoubtedly have been fully aware of the tribunal decision of 1908 re-affirming their citizenship rights, and possibly felt more secure once armed with this legal ruling. There is no further trace either, of a campaign fought either on the scale or with the solidarity of that mounted by the 'Indian colony' of renouncers to defend Saigon's policemen in 1907-1908. This is not to say that there was no further outcry. Rather, protest in the 1920s and 1930s consisted of short press campaigns run by the Franco-Tamil newspapers. Articles speaking out about the poor treatment of Indian *petit fonctionnaires* in the Cochinchinese service arose invariably around the time of elections. They were frequently linked to the 'Interventions of Ernest Outrey', a title which one paper regularly used to head articles of this nature. Little if any substantial progress appears to have been made through these campaigns to improve the conditions of these Indian employees. If anything their situation worsened, leading us to sympathise with those Indian voters who began to sense that their Deputy's motives were purely political.

Articles published in the Franco-Tamil press in the 1920s and early 1930s in support of Cochinchina's Indian *petit fonctionnaires* demonstrate how debates over their contractual terms came to have little to do with striving for recognition of their citizenship rights, and everything to do with surviving in the dual contexts of growing Vietnamese discontent and subsequently, deep economic crisis. Although the policeman's campaign of 1907-1908 was grounded in the rejection of the categories

⁶¹³ 'Défendons les deshérités : De grâce qu'on regularise la situation des gardiens de phare', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 18 August 1929.

'Indian cadre' and 'special cadre', the lowest ranking of Indian functionaries eventually found refuge in such classifications.

The establishment in 1917 of a 'special cadre' expressly for Indians employed as postmen in Cochinchina had been not to their complete satisfaction. It created, much as the Saigon Municipality had attempted to do for the police a decade earlier, a category for renouncer employees separate from the ranks of proper 'European' employment. A key part of Governor General Varenne's administrative reform from 1925 was to admit more Vietnamese into public service, beginning with the lowest 'European' ranks of the administration. It included, too, the tidying up of those 'native' ranks in which Indians had been habitually employed. It is seldom noted that it was Indians and other Frenchmen of the colonies who were more greatly affected by these reforms than Frenchmen of the Metropole.⁶¹⁴ In advance of these reforms, the 'special cadre' of Indian postmen was called in 1925 'to be dissolved through a process of extinction', as a bureaucrat elegantly put it.⁶¹⁵ No further hiring of Indian postmen was to be made and the eleven employees already employed within the cadre (all of whom were deemed too old to be promoted to higher 'European' positions) were to stay there until they resigned or died out.

Following this decision both the *Saigon-Dimanche* and the *Réveil Saigonnais* ran articles supporting the Indian postmen, putting forward images of unreliable Vietnamese postmen of questionable morals, and Indians dedicated to the service and to France. The *Réveil Saigonnais* asked rhetorically why, after all these years, Indians who were recognised as French citizens were not always hired as French cadres in Cochinchina. But soon both the *Réveil* and *Saigon-Dimanche* recognised that a more practical strategy, given the government's policies towards greater employment of indigenous Cochinchinese, was to defend jobs reserved exclusively for Indians.⁶¹⁶ Cochinchina's French administration eventually declared, in December of 1928, that the cadre of Indian postmen would be re-established, as a '*Hindou* cadre'. The relevant decision declared

⁶¹⁴ See L. Pargloire, 'Les cadres subalternes de fonctionnaires français', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 9 December, 1934.

⁶¹⁵ 'La question des facteurs indiens', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 12 August 1925. This pre-dates by some months the actual arrival in Indochina of Governor General Varenne, although he would have just assumed the post in Paris by this date.

⁶¹⁶ 'Défendons nos facteurs. Les facteurs indiens rendent de réels services à l'Administration', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 23 May 1928; 'Comment les lettres se perdent à Saigon', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 8 July 1928.

that salaries were to be paid in Indochinese piastres and leave payments disbursed in rupees.⁶¹⁷ To the Franco-Tamil press, it was a triumph. Despite renouncers' long defence in Cochinchina of their equality with metropolitan French citizens before the law, no comment was made in either newspaper on the fact that they were now commending the formation of exclusive categories for Indian functionaries, closed shops which hired solely from among Indians. It was a triumph too, in comparison to the situation four years' later. One of the administration's first responses to the economic crisis was to now reduce, rather than reform, the lowest administrative ranks, and Indians in the postal service were among the first to be laid off.⁶¹⁸

Conclusions

These debates show that Indians in the administration were not mere servants of French interests during their sojourn in Indochina. They also put pressure to bear on 'Greater France' to serve them as its citizens. Through these debates, Indians with French citizenship had a role in determining where the lines demarcating the 'boundaries of rule' were to be drawn. Elite renouncers were generally successful in securing the benefits which they claimed were their due as French citizens, while renouncers at the lower end of the social scale, and with positions of lower status, were less fortunate. Their cases together, however, show that these boundaries were not firmly plotted, but were drawn and redrawn as conditions changed. Renouncers' own idea of their place in the Cochinchinese social order shifted too. It is symptomatic of the ways in which the political landscape had changed that the disadvantaged class of renouncers could by the 1920s embrace contractual arrangements which they had vehemently rejected twenty years' earlier.

Local French administrators habitually referred to the risk of offending the *Annamites* as cause to deny contractual privileges to the Indians. Yet we do not know

⁶¹⁷ 'Le statut des facteurs hindous', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 16 December 1928; See also 'Le cadre des collecteurs de marchés', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 24 August 1925. Although promised, the 'Indian cadre' was never actually created, to renouncer dismay. See 'Va-t-on renvoyer des facteurs français de l'Inde?', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 16 April 1932.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.; And see 'Et voici maintenant celui du licenciement de plusieurs facteurs des P.T.T. Français de l'Inde.' *Saigon-Dimanche*, 4 June 1932.

what the local population of Saigon made of renouncers' many conspicuous displays of their privilege in the period up until the 1900s. Unfortunately, there are no Vietnamese analyses by first-hand observers of Indians' curt dismissal of the distinguished scholar Paulus Cúa as a mere French subject unfit to pass judgment on Indian French citizens such as themselves. Nor, for that matter, are there any Vietnamese accounts of the spectacle of Saigon's renounced Indians shouting victoriously from their 'Malabar' carriages following the legislative election of 1888. By no means can we conclude from this that there was no Vietnamese reaction. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, however, Vietnamese responses to the privileges of renounced Indians on Cochinchinese soil only became public and organised specifically within the context of Vietnamese calls for constitutional reform post World-War One. This came some decades after electoral representation and citizenship rights were first debated, by renounced Indians, on Cochinchinese soil.

Chapter Six: Vietnamese Engagement with Renouncers and other Indian Migrants

Although renounced Indians resident in Cochinchina very publicly asserted their rights as French citizens, it was not until the mid 1900s that first-hand Vietnamese accounts of the Indian presence in Cochinchina began to appear. Vietnamese comment did not consist solely of criticism of the renouncer presence, by any means, even though by the 1920s such critiques came to hold a firm place in the catalogue of Vietnamese reactions. Vietnamese attacked with equal vigour the wealth acquired by overseas Indian traders and landowners, the Chettiar hold on the money market, and the relations formed between some Indian men and local women. These latter relations, and other more novel kinship ties, produced particularly strong (and racially charged) reactions. Strong anti-Indian reactions at the prospect of kinship, however, did not prevent mixed unions from being formed, nor did it prevent both Vietnamese and resident Indians from sharing harmoniously in some of their religious and popular beliefs.

This chapter examines both intellectual critiques of the Indian presence and grassroots reactions based on ground-level encounters. It necessarily casts a wide net, examining Vietnamese reactions both to the renounced Indians and to the wider overseas Indian presence. Some renouncers were among those engaged in the activities under attack, and even when they weren't, Vietnamese responses to these activities, particularly by the late 1920s, came to colour the ways in which all Indians, including renouncers were viewed.

The appearance of the first Vietnamese commentators coincided with the emergence in the south of the very first French-educated 'modernist intellectuals' who began to put across views challenging the colonial order and garnered support for their causes through the press. Once they established channels to communicate their messages publicly, this southern non-communist elite made regular comment on the Indian presence in Cochinchina. These criticisms reflect southern intellectuals' distinct agendas

for reform, in that the critiques are as notable for what they choose to ignore at any given time as what they seize upon and attack. Thus the reactions of the earliest commentators (1900s) stand out as much for their attack on Indians' economic dominance as they do for their complete lack of interest in renouncer efforts to secure contractual privileges in the Cochinchinese administration, even though the debate was at its most public height at the time. Similarly, while the exercise of renounced Indians' citizenship rights on Vietnamese soil was used by Vietnamese reformers post-World War One as solid proof of the need for constitutional reforms in Cochinchina, neither the Constitutionals of this period, nor the earlier reformers showed much concern for the power wielded by Indian money lenders. This runs counter to the popular notion that resentment of the Chettians was an ongoing phenomenon not tied to any specific period, and was virtually the only Vietnamese reaction to the Indian presence.

Incidents in the 1920s and 1930s, in which Vietnamese physically attacked Indian interests in Cochinchina, (and also in Annam), reflected the spilling over of pre-existing ground-level tensions between Indian shopkeepers, tax farmers and petty traders, and the local people with whom they regularly came into contact. It also went hand-in-hand with the rise of a broader-based and more violent form of anti-colonialism. The Vietnamese outcry over Chettian loan foreclosure during the economic crisis of the late 1920s only added through the 1930s to growing anti-Indian antagonism. Very few renouncers, if any, were among those who directly incurred the mob violence and few were practising money lenders, but the racial nature of the attacks meant renounced Indians were increasingly included, in Vietnamese perceptions, in a single problematic overseas Indian community.

The complaints that Vietnamese journalist-reformers regularly published about the power and privileges of Indian intermediaries in Indochina, as well as the grassroots relationships between the local peoples of Cochinchina and overseas Indians, are all virtually unknown in historical analyses. This chapter sheds new light on the colonial history of southern Vietnam. It demonstrates how Indian migrants added to the complexity of local people's ground-level experiences of colonialism, and shows how

'Indian questions' formed an integral part of demands for reform by members of the southern intellectual elite in the early twentieth century.

Gilbert Chieu: 'Hit the *Chet* and expel the *Chal*'

The *Minh Tân* ('New Light') was the first of three reform-minded, non-communist movements implanted in the south prior to the emergence of the Communist party as the dominant political force in the 1930s. Its founder and leader, Gilbert Trần Chánh Chiếu was typical of the strong personalities who headed these movements, serving as journalists and editors as well as political leaders.

The appearance of the *Minh Tân* movement in Cochinchina in the first decade of the twentieth century was founded, in Sơn Nam's account, on the rise of a new class of landowner in the Mekong Delta who thrived under Governor General Paul Doumer's policies of expansion in the Mekong Delta. These landowners acquired generous land concessions which they worked through tenant farmers, and found capital readily available through the Chettiers or the French banks. They were hostile to the advantages and protection given to Chinese and Indian traders by the colonial regime but reliant on colonial power themselves to manage their tenants, they sought through constitutional means to reform the situation and to undermine the foreign monopoly by building up a force to compete with them.⁶¹⁹

Gilbert Trần Chánh Chiếu was a wealthy *Rạch Giá* landowner, a teacher and interpreter within the French administration, and one of the few Vietnamese of his time who was granted French citizenship. The *Minh Tân* was formed when Chiếu, having encountered *Duy Tân* leader Phan Bội Châu in the course of the latter's trip to gather support in the south, was drawn to that movement's aims of using Japanese support to establish a constitutional monarchy. Established as a clandestine southern branch of the *Duy Tân* movement, the *Minh Tân* provided financial support for southern youths to study in Japan. The movement translated this secretive political agenda into a more public programme of modernisation with Gilbert Chiếu's entry into journalism. In 1906

⁶¹⁹ Sơn Nam, *Bến Nghé Xưa*, pp. 392-393.

he acquired editorial control of one newspaper, *Nông Cổ Mìn Đàm* (Discussions on Commerce and Agriculture), which ran under his editorship until 1907. He founded another, *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* (News of the Six Provinces) in late 1907, which he edited until November 1908. The medium of publication for both newspapers was *quốc ngữ*, the romanised Vietnamese script which was just beginning to come into wider use.

Both of Gilbert Chiếu's newspapers extolled modernist agendas. They exhorted their readers, made up primarily of the new rising class of landowners and businessmen, to be progressive in their thinking and actions, calling compatriots 'to reproach themselves and to reject behaviours and manners not fitting with the times'.⁶²⁰ In business dealings, they urged them to be patriotic, and to oppose Chinese and Indian economic domination. They not only published slogans to encourage readers to seize power from the overseas migrants but also laid out detailed plans for enterprises which would contribute to the cause. Among the enterprises established to compete with Chinese business and support the organisation of the *Minh Tân*, was a hotel which served as the headquarters of the movement and as a meeting place for supporters when stopping in Saigon. Another *Minh Tân*-run hotel doubled as the editorial office of the *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* and a third operated as a secret meeting place for collecting funds. A soap factory in Mỹ Tho was set up as a model of a Vietnamese joint-stock enterprise. Gilbert Chiếu was arrested in late 1908 when the anti-government activities of the movement were exposed.⁶²¹

Pierre Brocheux maintains that Gilbert Chiếu and the *Minh Tân* movement have been relegated to the periphery by Vietnamese nationalist historians.⁶²² The fact that issues of neither *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* nor *Nông Cổ Mìn Đàm* published during Gilbert Chiếu's editorship are to be found in Vietnam or France lends support to this view. I rely here on articles reprinted by Sơn Nam from *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn*, and found in his studies

⁶²⁰ Sơn Nam, *Phong Trào*, p. 39.

⁶²¹ This description is compiled from various sources including Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, p. 144; Peycam, 'Intellectuals and Political Commitment', pp. 60-62; Sơn Nam, *Miền Nam Đầu Thế Kỷ XX*, pp. 35-39, pp. 220-224. Sơn Nam, *Bến Nghé Xưa*, pp. 391-407; Smith, 'The Development of Opposition', pp. 102-104; Pierre Brocheux, 'Note Sur Gilbert Chiếu', pp. 72-81.

⁶²² Brocheux, 'Note Sur Gilbert Chiếu', p. 72.

of the *Duy Tân* and *Minh Tân* movements.⁶²³ I make the assumption that, as he claims, his selection of articles is 'representative of all economic, cultural and political topics at the time'. He identifies three types of articles: those consisting of general calls to support the *Minh Tân*, those criticising corrupted or outdated practices, and articles directly addressing domestic and world politics.⁶²⁴

For Gilbert Chiếu and the advocates of his movement, Indian questions were more than an add-on to their attempts to break the Chinese monopoly. They were, in their own right, a source of contention and a subject of debate. Of the eighty-two articles and excerpts from *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* reprinted in Son Nam's two volumes, eight make reference to Indian economic dominance alongside that of the Chinese, and a further four directly address issues related to the activities of Indian businessmen in Cochinchina.

Indian migrants, frequently referred to as *Chà* or *Chà Và* in the newspaper's columns, were included in many of *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn*'s slogans exhorting readers to seize power from the overseas Chinese: 'Send *Quan Công* to his country and Buddha back to India!', 'Hit the *Chêc* and expel the *Chà*!'.⁶²⁵ The meaning of the term *Chà Và*, employed in the nineteenth century to identify Javanese traders in southern Vietnam, was expanded with new migrant influxes under French rule to include not only Javanese but Malays, Bawean (from the island of Bawean, near Madura in Java) and Indian migrants.⁶²⁶ As explained by a southern Vietnamese linguist, their perceived proximity in physical appearance led to the term being used for this broader group of foreigners.⁶²⁷ The *Chêc* (or *Chệt*) were the overseas Chinese.

The *Chà* to whom the newspaper referred were the traders, shopkeepers and tax farmers situated in the towns and along the waterways of the Mekong Delta. They would mainly have been South Indian Muslims. The use in the Vietnamese press of another

⁶²³ Son Nam, *Phong Trào*; Son Nam, *Miền Nam*.

⁶²⁴ Son Nam, *Cuộc Minh Tân*, pp. 225-226.

⁶²⁵ Slogans as quoted in Son Nam, *Bến Nghé Xưa*, p. 396. General Quan Công (Guan Yu) was a third century Chinese military hero, brought in to the Taoist pantheon of tutelary gods. See Taylor, *Goddess*, p. 3.

⁶²⁶ On Bawean in southern Vietnam see M. Stokhof, 'Javanese in Hồ Chí Minh City today: an Aftermath of Coolie Migration in French Colonial Vietnam', unpublished Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2002.

⁶²⁷ Interview Dr. Lý Tùng Hiếu, Southern Institute of Social Sciences, Ho Chi Minh City, 2 March 2005.

term, *Bảy* (or *Bảy Chà*), to refer to the objects of their criticism also suggests that the main targets were Muslim. *Bảy*, literally the number 'seven' in Vietnamese, is still in occasional use by southern Vietnamese to refer to people of Indian origin, but its source remains obscure.⁶²⁸ An explanation ventured by a Tamil-speaking Indo-Vietnamese was that *Bảy* derived from the Tamil *Bhai*, a polite addressive form used specifically for Muslims. It became corrupted and took on a derogatory tone in Vietnamese, while its meaning became broader, referring to any Indian migrant irrespective of his faith.⁶²⁹

There was some hostility present in the articles in *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* that addressed Indian economic dominance in Cochinchina. This was relatively restrained, however, in favour of reasoned analysis and studied descriptions of how the Chinese and Indians managed to secure their hold on the economy. More often than not, it was the Vietnamese who were rebuked for permitting the foreigners to make profits at their expense.

Some articles, in their criticism of Vietnamese attitudes, went so far as to express admiration for foreign businessmen. An article signed by 'Cang' of September 1908, claimed the Vietnamese preference for doing business with the Chinese and Indians was understandable. These foreigners, the author argued, refrained from social snobbery, whereas their few Vietnamese competitors looked down arrogantly on their customers, especially those 'coming in from the paddy fields'. 'If you continue to make a lot of hoo-ha and the foreigners quietly make profits, whose fault is it?', the author asked.⁶³⁰

Nguyễn Thị Phải, writing from Thủ Dầu Một in January 1908, had harsher words for those Indians who collected market and ferry taxes. Phải, who claimed to be a female market vendor, described the way in which the Indian tax farmers demanded fees higher than the official ceiling set by French authorities, beat people who refused to pay, and paid off village officials to keep them quiet. Yet while she condemned Indians for these

⁶²⁸ Interviews linguist Dr. Lý Tùng Hiếu, HCMC, 2 March 2005; historian Dr. Nguyễn Đình Đầu, HCMC, 25 February 2005; Mr. Nguyễn Tạo Ngô, Hanoi, 2 February 2005.

⁶²⁹ Discussions Mr. Atmanadene Audemar, HCMC, March 2005.

⁶³⁰ Cang, [no title given], *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* 44, September 1908, p. 6, [excerpted in Sơn Nam, *Miền Nam*, p. 265].

actions, she also judged the Vietnamese for their complicity: 'If we let the *Chà Và* get away with it, how shameful is that for the Vietnamese people?'. Phải implied this shame was heightened because Vietnamese men were failing in their duty to prevent their own women from being abused by foreign men.⁶³¹

Son Nam claims that *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn*'s attacks on the Chinese and the Indians were not racist.⁶³² For those articles that set themselves the task of understanding the workings of foreign Asian businesses in order to better compete with them, this is true. The absence of racial judgment about the Indian presence in Cochinchina in the majority of these articles underlines the fact that these are considered, intellectual responses to the foreign Asian presence in the colony. Some articles do demonstrate the existence of baser prejudices against Indians in Cochinchinese society. Although one exception is examined in the last section of this chapter, they generally did not themselves resort to such attacks. One article which illustrates this, published near to the Lunar New Year of 1908 criticised the extravagant spending of employees of Chinese and Indian businesses, pointing out the huge economic gap between the foreign businessmen and local people. Referring to an Indian as *Bảy Chà* the author confirms it is an insulting expression by remarking 'If I called him that [to his face] I would be scared he would hit me so hard I'd see stars' (lit. 'see my mother', *kêu vậy sợ oặt ní mẹ*).⁶³³

Gilbert Chiêu is credited with turning both *Nông Cổ Mìn Đàm* and *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* into anti-colonial newspapers. Both are said to have lost their political edge when they came under the control of subsequent owners and editors, who were more moderate or more loyal to the French. Son Nam's account of Gilbert Chiêu's downfall suggests that Chiêu was betrayed by his former supporters. Once French authorities arrested Chiêu, many of his former supporters claimed that they were not anti-French or anti-government, but merely donating funds to support new enterprises.⁶³⁴

⁶³¹ Nguyễn thị Phải, [no title given], *LTTV 11*, January 1908, p. 6, [excerpted in Son Nam, *Miền Nam*, p. 248].

⁶³² Son Nam, *Miền Nam*, p. 226.

⁶³³ I am grateful to Nguyễn Tạo Ngô for this translation. 'Ng. H.H. ', [no title given], *LTTV 14*, February 1908, p. 9-10 [excerpted in Son Nam, *Miền Nam*, p. 254].

⁶³⁴ Son Nam, *Bến Nghé Xưa*, p. 401.

The curtailing of the anti-colonial movement behind the publication of *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* prompted a reining-in of its more anti-French views, but this did not prevent the paper from continuing to publish articles critical of the foreign Asian business presence in Cochinchina. This included the campaign for which the paper is known to have been a key organizer, the Chinese boycott of 1919. It is striking in the post-Gilbert Chiếu *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* that the paper not only continued to produce many articles which decried Indian (and Chinese) economic dominance, but also began to patently appeal to baser prejudices. Between 1910 and 1919, the newspaper regularly reported Indian migrants' involvement in both petty misdemeanour and serious crime. Although presented as straight news items, many of these reports employed derogatory terms for their subjects, and aimed to capitalise on popular sentiments. The distinctions made in these articles between Indians who were French or British, Tamil or *Bombay*, citizens or subjects, were minor. The overseas Indians were collectively *Chà*, and were equally uncivilised, lascivious, and dishonest, either robbing local people of being robbed themselves because of their excessive wealth.⁶³⁵

Gilbert Chiếu's criticism of overseas Indian business can be taken to include the modest number of renouncers who were engaged in such activities, but he never attacked the privileges which renouncers enjoyed in Cochinchina because of their French citizenship. This is puzzling when we recall that Chiếu had undergone naturalisation to obtain French citizenship, and was himself a cadre in the colonial administration prior to the establishment of the *Minh Tân* movement. It is more of a mystery when we consider that the short period during which Gilbert Chiếu and the *Minh Tân* conveyed their calls for reform through the media of journalism occurred not long after renouncers had finally secured their voting rights in Cochinchina. Moreover, it coincided with the Indian policemen's affair, renouncers' most publicly fought battle over their citizenship rights in the colony. Yet these events and their significance were apparently of no interest to the *Minh Tân* press. *Minh Tân* indifference to the privileges of renounced Indians as citizens and voters in Cochinchina is consistent, however, with historians observations that

⁶³⁵ See for example, 'Chà-Và ăn cướp [Cha Va Robber]', *LTTV*, 6 November 1913; 'Bệnh Mao-Éch [An Epidemic Disease]', *LTTV*, 13 November, 1913; 'Một Vụ ăn cướp to [A Big Robbery]', *LTTV*, 1 November 1917; 'Chà-và Làm Ngan [Cha Va Misdeeds]', *LTTV*, 25 August 1913.

Vietnamese did not necessarily consider French naturalisation to be a privilege worth seeking prior to World War One, and that they showed a 'total lack of interest' in native representation prior to the late 1910s and the rise of the Constitutionalist Party.⁶³⁶ As we shall see now, there was no response from the southern elite to the presence and privileges of renounced Indians in Cochinchina until after the Second World War. Gilbert Chi  u is equally silent on the Chettiar presence, a question which I seek to understand later in this chapter.

The Constitutionlists and Nguyen An Ninh: 'La question indienne'

It is not until the emergence of the Constitutionalist Party in Cochinchina that we begin to see active Vietnamese criticism of the privileges of Indian French citizens resident in Cochinchina. The advocates and leaders of the Constitutionalist Party were businessmen, landlords, civil servants and teachers of southern Vietnam who made up a newly-assertive, French-educated bourgeoisie. The newly acquired wealth of many within this group, and their western education, united them in the conviction that their increasingly powerful contribution to social and economic progress entitled them as a class to a leadership role.⁶³⁷ Rather than national independence, they sought political reform. The main pillars of their programme were fourfold. They comprised the expansion of education; the modernisation of local government and the abolition of the remains of the mandarin system; the creation of a truly representative council or parliament based on a wide indigenous electoral franchise; and reform of the naturalisation laws to enable Vietnamese (at least those they deemed to be sufficiently well-educated and forward-thinking) to more easily access French citizenship.⁶³⁸

The Constitutionalist party emerged in the context of Governor General Albert Sarraut's policy of 'Franco-Vietnamese collaboration'. His support of elite participation

⁶³⁶ On early Vietnamese attitudes towards naturalisation see Osborne, *French Presence*, pp. 126-129; On 'native' representation, Ho Tai, 'Politics of Compromise', p. 373.

⁶³⁷ Ho Tai, *Radicalism*, pp. 40-41.

⁶³⁸ See Smith 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party', p. 135; Ralph Smith, *Vietnam and the West*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971, p. 93.

in the press and publishing has been read as a conscious political strategy of engendering public debate through this westernised elite in order to suppress more radical nationalist reactions.⁶³⁹ The two (or three, one was re-named) newspapers associated with the Constitutionalists took advantage of relatively lenient censorship laws governing the French language press from the 1920s by publishing in French. At least at their inception, both papers enjoyed direct French state support. The *Tribune Indigène* (1917-1925) was subsidized by Governor General Albert Sarraut, who also selected Bùì Quang Chiêu as its editor.⁶⁴⁰ Chiêu continued as editor to the newspaper's successor, the *Tribune Indochinoise* (1926-1942). Although Chiêu's detractors derided his conservatism, his newspaper became sufficiently intimidating to the colonial regime that in 1919 the subsequent Governor Maspéro, less liberal than Sarraut, attempted to dilute the threat by supporting the establishment of a second 'moderate' newspaper. This was the *Echo Annamite*, with Nguyễn Phan Long appointed as its director. Although it began with a similar conservative political stance, the *Echo Annamite* nonetheless quickly became more critical than the *Tribune Indigène*.⁶⁴¹

Bùì Quang Chiêu (1873-1945) was the effective leader of the Constitutionalist movement. A French citizen, he was educated at the *École Coloniale* in France in the late 1890s and entered the colonial bureaucracy upon his return. He was also one of the most prominent landowners in Cantho.⁶⁴² Nguyễn Phan Long was an employee of the customs service, who had occasionally written articles for the *Tribune Indigène*.⁶⁴³

Although Constitutionalist politics have been much analysed, nowhere has it been remarked how the Constitutionalists' class aspirations, their interest in reform within the French system and their demands for native political representation were conveyed in part through criticism of the ability of renounced Indians to vote and to enjoy other privileges of French citizenship in Cochinchina. Moreover, although the Constitutionalists eventually disassociated themselves from more extremist views such as

⁶³⁹ Peycam 'Intellectuals and Political Commitment', pp. 70-71.

⁶⁴⁰ Ho Tai, 'Politics of Compromise', pp. 379-380.

⁶⁴¹ Ho Tai, *Radicalism*, p. 45.

⁶⁴² Smith 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party', p. 133.

⁶⁴³ Ho Tai, *Radicalism*, p. 45.

those put forward by Nguyễn An Ninh, his newspaper *La Cloche Fêlée* published articles on the topic of renouncer involvement in Cochinchinese politics which closely echoed the objections of the Constitutionalist.

Articles questioning the political powers and legal privileges of renounced Indians in Cochinchina began to appear intermittently in the *Tribune Indigène* following Governor General Maurice Long's 1922 reorganisation of the Colonial Council. This reorganisation responded in part to Constitutionalist demands for better 'native' representation. Through these reforms, the number of Vietnamese representatives on the Colonial Council was increased to ten, and the Vietnamese electorate was expanded from 1,500 to 20,000. As Ralph Smith has commented, these numbers were still small compared to the total population of three million Vietnamese in Cochinchina at the time.⁶⁴⁴ However, a remaining, and just as pressing concern for the Vietnamese elite was the persistent ability of French citizens of Indian origin in the colony to decide the outcome of legislative and Colonial Council elections.

The undue influence of renounced Indians on the political destiny of the colony was the main theme of an article entitled 'La question indienne', which appeared in the *Tribune Indigène* in December of 1922. The problem was expressed as the 'relative numeric weakness of the French grouping and the exclusion of the indigenous element'. The size of the 'French' electoral college, the article noted, was some 2000 citizens. Among them, 350 were naturalised Vietnamese, 700 were renounced Indians, and 1000 were French from the Metropole. But of the metropolitan French, 'half are absent from the colony and of the other half, a good number abstain or are unable to vote on the day'. Given that their votes, it claimed, were open to the highest bidder, Indians with French citizenship became the 'uncontested arbitrators' of any election.⁶⁴⁵

The issue of Indian political privileges in Cochinchina continued to be raised in the pages of the *Tribune Indigène*, and its successor the *Tribune Indochinoise*, at virtually

⁶⁴⁴ Smith, 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party', p. 137.

⁶⁴⁵ 'La question indienne', *Tribune Indigène*, 30 December 1922.

every legislative and Colonial Council election throughout the 1920s. They were joined by critiques, which were often more forceful, in the Constitutionalist-associated *Echo Annamite*.

The *Echo Annamite* was more thorough than Bùi Quang Chiêu's newspapers in its criticism of Indian privileges in Cochinchina, attacking not only the political status of renounced Indians, but the way in which their citizenship was granted. Two years before the *Tribune Indigène* had begun its critique in 1922 of the renouncer role in Cochinchinese politics, the *Echo Annamite* was already publishing articles which spoke of the ease with which Indians could obtain French citizenship and compared this to the paltry number of naturalised Vietnamese in Cochinchina:

After sixty years of French domination, there are in Cochinchina at most 250 naturalised *Annamites* against 500 to 600 Indians [with French citizenship]. And they [the naturalised *Annamites*] are still thought to be too many for the tranquillity of the country!⁶⁴⁶

Although in previous decades the Vietnamese had displayed a disinterest in French naturalisation, the First World War brought about a change in attitudes. Many Vietnamese now favoured naturalisation as their just reward for their loyalty and support – be it financial or in military service – during the years of conflict. In the catalogue of reforms compiled and presented to incoming Governor General Varenne in late 1925, the Constitutionlists now claimed to be 'deeply interested' in the question. In addition to the 'political, legal and administrative privileges' which naturalisation conferred, it also acted as a barometer of the 'liberal intentions of the French government towards the French people'. This 'Wish List of the Vietnamese People', serialised in the *Echo Annamite*, again used the according of citizenship to Indians from the French possessions to demonstrate how far French 'liberal intentions' towards the Vietnamese fell short. The 'Wish list' compared the 'simple formality' of renunciation enjoyed by Indians to obtain citizenship with the lengthy and complicated procedures required by Vietnamese, which

⁶⁴⁶ 'La naturalisation française', *Echo Annamite*, 24 April 1920.

had resulted in a mere three hundred Vietnamese in Cochinchina securing the privilege by 1925 out of a total of three million inhabitants.⁶⁴⁷

If France's liberal intentions towards the *Annamites* fell short, however, its liberal granting of citizenship to Indians resulted in Cochinchina in a system far removed from the Republic's principles of equality. The 'great influx of Indian immigrants arriving in the Cochinchinese colony', as described in the 'Wish List of the Vietnamese People', 'constitute an important block that overlaps with the European contingent to dominate the electorate in Cochinchina'. 'Under the protection of Republican France', it was pointed out:

Three different races live together in Asia. [Their'] political power is in inverse proportion to their number... the electorate of Cochinchina for the legislative election consists of three thousand voters, for whom two thousand are Europeans, seven hundred are Indians and three hundred naturalised Vietnamese French: the latter are supposed to represent a population of three million.⁶⁴⁸

Those voters with the most power, it was claimed, had the least commitment to the colony. Moreover, those who financed the whole structure had no voice at all:

Of the three ethnic groups that form the electorate, the European component is made up of a majority of civil servants who never think of settling down in this colony... The Indians have always looked at Indochina as a colony of transit. As for the three million Vietnamese who are riveted to their land and who provide all the revenues for the budgets, they have no say in the matter.⁶⁴⁹

Indian and French functionaries were a further focus of attack. The 'Wish List' underlined the need to cut subordinate positions in the administration filled by French and Indians in order to create more positions for qualified Vietnamese while avoiding an 'over-inflation of civil servants'.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁷ The 'Wish List' was serialised in the *Echo Annamite* from 28 November to 4 December 1925. I use English translations as published in Truong Buu Lam, ed. *Colonialism Experienced, Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism 1900-1931*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003, pp. 208-227. Quotes in this paragraph pp. 218-220.

⁶⁴⁸ Truong, *Colonialism Experienced*, p. 220.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 221.

The Echo Annamite's attack on Indian voters was taken up again in the lead-up to local elections in 1927. In one article Nguyễn Phan Long accused Edouard Marquis, the politically-involved editor of the Franco-Tamil *Réveil Saigonnais*, of trying to fashion for himself a role in local Cochinchinese politics akin to that of the Pondicherrian leader Gaebelé. Gaebelé had secured a monopoly on the Senatorial and Deputy seats for French India through political manipulation:

The Indians are free to do what they want in their own country. In this country, which is ours, and where a legal fiction allows them to presume towards us the rights of the conqueror, it is completely unjust that the natives must tolerate, (because of their intrusion in elections where they, the natives themselves, are excluded), an abnormal situation so prejudicial against them.⁶⁵¹

Such attitudes clearly created some concern amongst French authorities as this article was included as a clipping in the Security Services' 'Press Review' for 1927.

The Constitutionalist Party eventually distanced itself from the more extreme anti-colonial views of Nguyễn An Ninh. He was the main figure at the head of a 'new younger generation of French-educated Vietnamese who were impatient for change' and willing to support violence to bring it about.⁶⁵² Yet during its intermittent publication from 1923 to 1926, Ninh's *Cloche Fêlée* took a similar stance to the Constitutionlists on Indians with French citizenship and their domination of Cochinchina's electoral college. His newspaper's political critique of French colonial power was more pointed than those seen in Constitutionalist-related publications.

In the legislative election of 1924, the 'perennial Deputy' Ernest Outrey was re-elected as the representative of Cochinchina in the French National Assembly.⁶⁵³ The *Cloche Fêlée* attributed his continued ability to win to a system which allowed French politicians to manipulate the supposed venality of Indian voters:

⁶⁵¹ ANOM FM/5 SLOTFOM 14 Revue de la Presse Indochinoise 1927: Nguyễn Phan Long, 'La France laissera-t-elle les Indiens faire de la Cochinchine ce qu'ils ont fait de l'Inde française?', *Echo Annamite*, 25 March, 1927.

⁶⁵² Smith, 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party', p. 142.

⁶⁵³ The phrase is Virginia Thompson's: Thompson, *French Indo-China*, p. 311.

[Outrey] is once again pompously called *Deputy of Cochinchina*, that is the representative of almost four million human beings...he...cannot deny he owes his position in Parliament to the French...of India, of Corsica, of Réunion...[he was] elected by the majority of an electoral college of 300 voters, foreigners living nearly all at the expense of Princess Cochinchina...

No one can deny just how heavily the mass of the French...of India weighs in the legislative elections, these black Frenchmen, these *pariahs* whose mentality Mr. Outrey knows only too well, this category of voters whose interests are not here but in Pondicherry...These *Hindous* sent here by the French administration to lend weight to the prestige of the dominators and to the official candidates, up until now have nevertheless shown themselves worthy of the role reserved for them.

No one can deny that success is assured to the candidate for the deputation who speaks this language to an electoral college composed primarily of functionaries: 'Vote for me and I promise to prevent the *Annamites* from acceding to the citizenship rights that you enjoy and that would permit them to take the places that you occupy'.⁶⁵⁴

The *Cloche Fêlée* also permitted itself to publish harsher, more racially-based judgements of Indian migrants than the Constitutionalist newspapers. An article in the *Cloche Fêlée* dated from 1925 suggested that the Vietnamese had no admiration for renounced Indians' struggle to secure equality with the French. To Vietnamese reformers, the legal gains made by renouncers resident in Cochinchina simply made a mockery of the *mission civilisatrice*:

Following a survey...it has been found that French civil servants in Indochina send annually to their families in the Metropole some 60 million francs in total... the least police agent, white or black earns, from his start in the honourable corporation, 300 piastres per month courtesy of *Annamite* taxpayers. ... These gentlemen, the European civil servants - whether they be snow white, café au lait or raven black - have come here, be assured, to civilise the savage *Annamites*...It is fair that the latest barefoot newcomer from France or Pondicherry should have his aperitif at noon and in the evening. Where do we fit in all of this? What is to become of the prestige of the conqueror? And what purpose is served by the colonies?⁶⁵⁵

By the late 1920s, the *Echo Annamite* began to publish articles which took a similar approach. In a 1927 article a certain Le-Lac-Tho claimed that the Indian French

⁶⁵⁴ 'Le Sens de l'Election de M. Outrey', *La Cloche Fêlée*, 19 May 1924.

⁶⁵⁵ 'La solde des fonctionnaires européens d'Indochine', *La Cloche Fêlée*, 24 December 1925.

citizens brought to Cochinchina 'no element and no quality susceptible of civilising the *Annamites*'. They were, as the title of the article stated, a 'Fourth Colour', added to the three colours of the French flag. This colour, 'black':

extends like an ink stain; it invades the administration where, in subordinate positions it represents a growing number of French who are 'too brown', who sometimes have *Annamites* under their orders and towards whom they can claim no moral or intellectual superiority, indeed the reverse. They cannot and do not want to be anything other than functionaries living as parasites in this country.⁶⁵⁶

The failure of French authorities to address complaints about the power wielded by Indian French citizens appears to have bred cynicism among Constitutionalists by the latter half of the 1920s. In an editorial in August 1926, Bui Quang Chieu's tone was despondent:

In the French electoral college, faced with ethnic French and French Indian elements, the naturalised citizens constitute such a derisory minority that we can affirm that their action on the election of the Deputy and the Colonial councillors is nil.⁶⁵⁷

At the time of legislative elections later that year, the *Tribune Indochinoise* did not publish its own copy but merely reprinted attacks on the 'venal' Indian vote from French newspapers in Saigon. The brief comments originating from the *Tribune* itself were succinct statements of its support for the rumour that Indians were shipped in to Saigon's port specifically for the purpose of voting, and then sent out again. A single line in the newspaper on the eve of the Deputy election read: 'Twenty-five Indian bridge passengers disembarked at Saigon from the *Azay le Rideau* on October 15 1926. No comment'.⁶⁵⁸

The Constitutionalists have been referred to as a 'bourgeois elite', in contrast to more radical voices demanding change, beginning with the emergence of Nguyễn An Ninh.⁶⁵⁹ They have been berated in the historical record for not being sufficiently radical; yet the failure on the part of French powers to enfranchise this sector of society (to which

⁶⁵⁶ Le-Lac-Tho, 'La quatrième couleur', *Echo Annamite*, 5 April 1927.

⁶⁵⁷ 'Le Conseil Colonial', *Tribune Indochinoise*, 23 August 1926.

⁶⁵⁸ 'Ça promet pour 1928', *Tribune Indochinoise*, 20 October 1926.

⁶⁵⁹ This view is voiced in Smith, 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party', and Ho Tai 'Politics of Compromise' and *Radicalism*.

Ninh also belonged) has received little attention. The criticisms outlined above of French Indian political privilege in Cochinchina are a serious indictment of this French failing. Despite repeated criticisms by members of the Vietnamese elite of the political dominance of renounced Indians, Bùi Quang Chiêu could opine six years after the reforms of 1922 that '*Annamites* who are naturalised French citizens' continued to be 'virtually excluded from the public life of the country'.⁶⁶⁰ Another article in the same year, repeating criticism about the makeup of Cochinchina's electoral college, appeared to foretell the radical turn in Cochinchinese politics: '...what emerges as a great danger, is to keep these westernised *Annamites* distanced from the public life of their country, to treat them as *pariahs* in their own country'.⁶⁶¹

It is ironic that while Bùi Quang Chiêu and Nguyễn An Ninh considered Indian French citizens to be standing in the way of their own admission into the public life of Cochinchina, both turned to Indian nationalist politics as a model for their aspirations. Ralph Smith has noted the Constitutionalists' close watch on nationalist currents in India:

The comparison with British India is not so unreasonable as the events in Vietnam since 1945 might lead one to suppose; it was one which the Constitutionalists themselves made, for one of their principal sources of inspiration during the 1920s was the career of Gandhi.⁶⁶²

Bùi Quang Chiêu established ties with the Indian Congress Party in 1927, and was invited to its annual conference in Calcutta in January of 1929.⁶⁶³ He regularly published articles on India, as did Nguyễn An Ninh, an equally keen observer of political developments in India. Both men took an avid interest in the writings of the politically engaged poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. When Kalidas Nag spoke in Saigon in 1924, (standing in for Tagore who was obliged to postpone his visit), Ninh's presence was noted by the Secret Service.⁶⁶⁴ When Tagore finally did visit, in June 1929, it was at Bùi Quang Chiêu's invitation.⁶⁶⁵ Ralph Smith maintains that had the French lent greater

⁶⁶⁰ 'Le Conseil Colonial', *Tribune Indochinoise*, 23 August 1926.

⁶⁶¹ 'Propos d'un Annamite au sujet d'un motion', *Tribune Indochinoise*, 10 September 1926.

⁶⁶² Smith 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party', p. 148.

⁶⁶³ Peycam 'Intellectuals and Political Commitment', p. 123.

⁶⁶⁴ ANOM GGI65474 Rapport Annuel Contrôle des immigrants asiatiques 1923-1924: Milieux Indiens.

⁶⁶⁵ Smith, 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party', p. 148.

support to the Constitutionals, Chiêu could have gone on to form a party, 'comparable to the Indian Congress Party, smaller in scale but capable of uniting into a single movement the majority of the colony's moderate politicians'.⁶⁶⁶

We know from newspaper reports at the time that the Vietnamese rubbed shoulders with resident members of the renouncer elite at 'Indian' events in Saigon, such as Tagore's visit. There is evidence too, that some of the more independent-minded Indian residents in Saigon were politically aligned at some points with Bùi Quang Chiêu. During the municipal elections of 1919, for example, when the Constitutionals really emerged as a serious political force, but before their concerns about Indian political influence had been voiced, two Pondicherrians, Sinnaya and Isidore (the former a renouncer, the latter probably Indo-European), ran for office alongside Chiêu on the list of the socialist Monin.⁶⁶⁷ They, along with Chiêu, had to accept Monin's defeat. However, at least one comment by Nguyễn An Ninh suggests that his interest in developments in British India only heightened his scorn for what he perceived as the hypocrisy of renounced Indians on Vietnamese soil: 'Already indifferent to the fate of India itself, [they] cannot think of the unfortunate destiny of another subjugated Asian race'.⁶⁶⁸

If we take the Indian presence in Cochinchina as a lens through which to view the politics of the colony in this period, we see not only how firmly renounced Indians were considered to be planted in the way of the aspirations of the Vietnamese elite. This analysis shows too, just how deeply the Vietnamese opposition figures of the time were aware of how they were held back, in a way that their counterparts were not, not only in British India, but even in those pockets of India governed by their own French masters.

Grassroots responses and increasingly troubled relations

While the educated elite of Cochinchina engaged in debates over the undue privileges and power of some Indian residents of the colony, more fundamental tensions

⁶⁶⁶ Smith, *Vietnam and the West*, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁶⁷ 'Résultats élections municipales', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 31 December 1919; on Monin see Ho Tai, 'Politics of Compromise', pp. 387-388.

⁶⁶⁸ 'Le Sens de l'Élection de M. Outrey', *La Cloche Fêlée*, 19 May 1924.

existed between local people at the grassroots level and the Indian migrants with whom they came into contact. The record of poor relations and scattered confrontations between overseas Indians and local Cochinchinese in the first decades of the twentieth century reveals more raw and in many ways more troubled engagements than the relatively measured analyses found in the responses of members of the intellectual elite. In the 1920s and 1930s, these tensions spilled over into incidents of violence, some of which, according to French security officials, bore the stamp of communist organisation. It was also channelled into particularly harsh criticisms of Indian moneylenders with the onset of the Great Depression.

Anti-Indian feeling at grassroots level stemmed from specific types of contact between the local Cochinchinese and overseas Indians. Some of the most fraught relations were between Indian tax farmers and local people who sold their produce in rural markets, or moored their boats at landings. This animosity was borne in part of Vietnamese dislike for the French institution of tax farming, and in part of their dislike for the Indians hired to undertake the task. It did not help matters that some tax farmers were liable to abuse their positions, by charging higher dues than the posted rates, and resorting to physical violence for those who would not pay.⁶⁶⁹ Brocheux's work on the Mekong Delta, although it does not refer to violence, similarly mentions that itinerant peddlers and market traders were hounded by Indian tax collectors at markets and ferry crossings.⁶⁷⁰ The Vietnamese response, both to the colonial institution and the less-than-honest tax farmer, was to hurl verbal abuse.

When Cochinchinese villagers refused to recognise the legality of an Indian tax farm, as they did on several occasions, the tax farmer was faced with the immediate problem of collecting his dues. However, he generally managed to pass the problem on to the state, by refusing to pay his contracted sum, and, in some cases, taking legal action against the villagers. Through these actions, tax farmers and villagers together created potentially more serious threats to social order and French colonial authority. In this equation, the most troubling effects the tax farmer finally had to endure were the

⁶⁶⁹ Nguyễn Thị Phái, [no title given], *LTTV* 11, January 1908, p. 6, [excerpted in Sơn Nam, *Miền Nam*, p. 248].

⁶⁷⁰ Brocheux, *Mekong Delta*, pp. 87-88.

villagers' ongoing campaigns to insult him. In 1918, the tax farmer So Mouttayah brought a case against the notables of the village of Phuoc Tan in Biên Hoà province, for refusing to recognise the extent of his farm over mooring and loading along the quay. Central among So Mouttayah's complaints to the provincial administration was that the villagers, 'incite[d] the boatmen and carters to direct indecent gestures to me'.⁶⁷¹ In 1925, a tax farmer of markets in the vicinity of Cantho by the name of Yaccoumsah (Yakum Sahib), was jailed for withholding his revenues from the French authorities – revenues he had been unable to collect in the markets. As a British subject, the law of *indigénat* had been incorrectly applied to his sentence. In Yaccoumsah's appeal for his release, one of his most pressing concerns was that he had to suffer the taunts of Vietnamese prisoners working the *corvée* alongside him.⁶⁷²

If shows of organised resistance to tax farms remained limited, the pouring forth of verbal abuse was a more constant response. Indian migrants engaged in tax farming had close market-level contact with local people, but nevertheless many did not readily speak Vietnamese. Even one of Vietnam's former prime ministers, who grew up in Vĩnh Long before the Second World War, remembers female market traders hurling insults at Indian tax farmers. Satisfied at being able to vent their frustrations, he claimed the market vendors were secure in the knowledge that the tax farmers, (who just put out their hands and asked for their money), did not understand the full extent of the women's invective.⁶⁷³

While shouting abuse at Tamil tax farmers might be explained as a way of indirectly venting one's frustrations about French colonial rule, other rumours, taunts and forms of verbal abuse were more specifically directed at the Indian migrants. Hanoi in the north is more rife than Saigon with memories of how the taunting of Indian merchants featured in childhood games. The equation perhaps was that childhood bravado came in inverse proportion to the size of the foreign population able to give chase. One Hanoi

⁶⁷¹ VNA2 GD3397 Plainte de M. So Mouttayah contre les exigences des notables du village de Phuoc Tan (Bien Hoa) 1918: So Mouttayah to Administrator Bien Hoa, 3 January 1918.

⁶⁷² VNA2 GD445 Peine administrative infligée par le Chef de la province de Cantho contre M. Yaccoumsah, indien sujet anglais 1925.

⁶⁷³ Conversation Võ Văn Kiệt, Hanoi, September 2005.

author admits playing a game that was specifically devised to anger Indian Muslims engaged as merchants in the city. As a child growing up in Hanoi's old quarter, he and his friends found endless amusement in 'showing the pig's ears' to Muslims gathered at the Tamil mosque. This activity consisted of young boys grasping two handfuls of the cloth from their shirts and waving them at the merchants, who would run after them, incensed, in hot pursuit.⁶⁷⁴ A poem recalled by another Hanoian is widely remembered by people of his generation who grew up in the city in the 1930s and 1940s. It is infused with disrespect for Indian migrants, whose activities in that city included selling cakes:

*Ông tây đen
Năm trong cái bồ
Dánh cái rắm'
Thành bánh ga tô*

(Mr. Black Westerner
Sat in a basket
Let out a fart
And out came a cake)⁶⁷⁵

The term *tây đen*, or 'Black Westerner', was used for Indian migrants, as well as the small number of Africans who found their way to Indochina through engagement in the French army. *Tây đen* conveyed the gap, in some Vietnamese perceptions, between the privileges these foreigners enjoyed, and the low place they should have 'rightfully' occupied in a racially ordered social hierarchy.

It might be delving too far for present purposes into questions of psychology to try to establish whether the children who deployed these taunts and poems with such delight drew their inspiration in any way from the attitudes of their parents. An advertisement which appeared in Saigon's *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* in 1914, however, demonstrates that adults in the south displayed the sentiments they held for Indian milk sellers far more consciously (see Plate 7). These bad feelings could even be turned to commercial purposes. The advertisement, which promoted a French brand of milk,

⁶⁷⁴ Nguyễn Mạnh Cường and Nguyễn Minh Ngọc, *Người Chăm (Những Nghiên Cứu Bước Đầu)* [The Cham (Initial Studies)], Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 2003, pp. 5-6. I am grateful to Andrew Hardy for bringing this reference to my attention. Also, discussion with Professors Lê Thị and Đặng Phong, Tam Đảo, 2 September 2008.

⁶⁷⁵ Discussion with Professor Đặng Phong, Hanoi, Spring 2002; Discussion with Professors Lê Thị and Đặng Phong, Tam Đảo, 2 September 2008.

depicted a female Vietnamese servant at the gate of a wealthy villa. She shouts at a man dressed humbly in a *dhoti* holding two milk bottles. The caption reads:

You little *Chà Và*, where have you come from? Why don't you go away. Your milk smells like old goat. Our household only buys *La Petite Fermière* milk. Run away quickly, or you're dead!⁶⁷⁶

Thus do we find Vietnamese antagonism towards Indian emigrants deployed by a French company to sell tinned milk to the Vietnamese. Vietnamese disdain for the humble Tamil milkman continued into the 1930s. In 1931, the Franco-Tamil *Saigon-Dimanche* printed a refutation of the 'idiotic rumour' prevalent in Cochinchina that Indian milkmen, 'milked their cows and goats with their mouths'.⁶⁷⁷

In the record of ground-level animosity that Vietnamese held for resident Indians, little trace can be found, prior to the Depression, of the money lending Chettiars. This is surprising taken the long record of French concern over the usurious rates the Indian 'parasites' supposedly demanded.⁶⁷⁸ It is surprising too that Chettiars were never the subject of concerted attack by any of the journalists of Saigon's non-communist reformist press. It is particularly puzzling in the case of Gilbert Chiéu, not only because of his commitment to fight foreign economic domination, but because it was the Chettiars who oversaw his downfall. At the sudden end of his political and journalistic career, at the time of his arrest, all of Gilbert Chieu's land was mortgaged and he was indebted in large part to a 'Souna Parra Ana Sirra Soupramanianchetty'.⁶⁷⁹

The reasons for a subdued Vietnamese response to the Indian moneylenders, pre 1929, are too complex to delve into in any detail here, but probably relate to the composition of the Chettiar client base and the nature of lending itself. The Chettiars' rural clients at the beginning of the twentieth century were primarily the better-off, land-owning class who benefited from the Chettiar availability of credit to finance agricultural

⁶⁷⁶ *LTTV*, 26 February 1914. I am grateful to Erica Peters for drawing this advertisement to my attention.

⁶⁷⁷ 'Taper sur les pauvres hindoues est si facile!', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 6 December 1931.

⁶⁷⁸ See for example Mathieu, *Les Prêts Usuaires*.

⁶⁷⁹ Brocheux, 'Note Sur Gilbert Chiéu', p. 73.

and extra-agricultural activities, as well as to on-lend to landless peasants.⁶⁸⁰ As long as the Mekong Delta economy was buoyant and the frontier expanding, the Chettiers' wealthy landowning clients had little objection to make. This was as relevant to supporters of the *Minh Tân* movement as it was to landowners among the intellectual elite of the 1920s.

Popular Vietnamese responses to the presence of Indian migrants in their midst do not, similarly, concern relations between local people and Indians who had become French citizens through 'renunciation', except to the extent that a limited number of Indian traders, tax farmers and (possibly) milkmen were renouncers. There was a level at which it was understood, however, that all Indians, regardless of distinctions of religion or place of origin, could be included in Vietnamese invectives against the *Chà*. It was not until anti-Indian feeling turned to physical violence, however, that renouncers based in Cochinchina really began to grasp this. A number of anti-Indian incidents which turned to violence occurred in various parts of Vietnamese Indochina in the 1920s and 1930s. Their significance was reported and debated in the small but active Franco-Tamil press which represented above all the interests of renouncers. Often these newspapers debated with the Vietnamese and metropolitan French-run presses over the facts and the meaning of the incidents. Although it is difficult to establish what really took place in each case, a pattern repeats itself through conflicting versions of the incidents: an accusation of Indian brutality against a Vietnamese served as the pretext for a Vietnamese boycott or attacks against Indian shops or interests. The Vietnamese person said to have been subject to the initial Indian attack was invariably either female or in some other way considered to be a particularly vulnerable member of Vietnamese society and thus in need of the wider society's protection. The reports of these incidents provide a further context in which to understand the responses of Vietnamese to Indian migrants in their midst.

The first of these incidents took place in Saigon in 1925. Labelled the 'Bombay boycott', it began as a protest against 'Bombay' shopkeepers on Catinat street, (most probably the row of Sindhi traders established there) but extended generally to *hindou*

⁶⁸⁰ Accounts of this type of credit relationship are described in Ngô Vĩnh Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 84-97; Phan Trung Nghĩa, *Công tử Bạc Liêu*, p. 27; de Fcyssal, *L'Endettement agraire en Cochinchine*.

shopkeepers. In September of that year, an incident occurred in which a Vietnamese woman, the wife of a functionary, was accused at one Sindhi shop of stealing an umbrella which she had just purchased, she claimed, at a neighbouring shop. An Indian employee of the shop then hit the woman with the purportedly stolen item, breaking it in two. In the spirit of the short-lived anti-Chinese boycott of 1919, the same papers which took up that cause (the *Trung Lập Báo* and the *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn*) now exhorted Vietnamese women to stay away from the Indian shops. The boycott does not appear to have lasted more than a couple of weeks. The *Trung Lập Báo* backed down, 'with pity for the compatriots of Gandhi' and 'with respect for French merchants' who protested that as suppliers to the Sindhis, they too were being affected by the boycott. Posters continued to be mounted, however, urging people to continue the protest, and the *Echo Annamite*, although it refrained from real participation itself, claimed that the *Trung Lập Báo* had given in too soon to the 'foreigners who have forgotten the pure and simple civility which they owe to us and to our women in exchange for the generous hospitality which is given to them'.⁶⁸¹

In June 1928 two similar incidents occurred within days of each other in the town of Vinh in Annam, and in the *rue Viénot* in Saigon. As the *Réveil Saigonnais* recounted the story, an Indian shop in Vinh was crowded on market day in early June when a young man was caught stealing cloth. An Indian employee caught the thief and slapped him. The thief (who happened to be clubfooted) fell and hit his head. This action so outraged the crowd that they began to throw bricks and stones at this shop, and two other Indian-owned premises on the street. The *gendarmes*, unable to control the situation, called in the militia, who cleared the street and remained guarding the Indian shops. When the shops opened again, following three days of closure under guard, the shopkeepers were menaced by some of the perpetrators of the violence: 'They ...came into the shops demanding to be sold 'black khaki' and if that was not produced they would have 'red khaki''. Such was the tension, the newspaper reported, that Indian merchants packed up their shops and left the town shortly afterwards.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸¹ 'Boycottage', *Echo Annamite*, 22 September 1925.

⁶⁸² 'Une curieuse coincidence. L'affaire de la rue Viénot', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 27 June 1928.

The *rue Viénot* incident, which took place a few weeks' later in a Saigon street known for the presence of Indian cloth merchants, was remarkably similar. When a man by the name of Pham Van Hai attempted to steal bobbins from the shop of Abdoukadaré and Company, an Indian employee threw a shoe to stop him. The shoe hit the thief in the eye and seriously injured him. An attack on the shop, described as a 'veritable battle' was organised to avenge Hai's injuries some days later.⁶⁸³

In August 1936 a confrontation took place at the Amiral Roze Street Temple in Saigon dedicated to the Hindu goddess Mariamman, between the '*bengali*' guard stationed to watch the temple, and two young Vietnamese girls. It led to calls for a Vietnamese boycott of all Hindu temples in the city. Although it is unclear if the boycott was actually carried out, it would have been a deprivation for many Saigoneses as the temples, (the Mariamman one in particular), were experiencing at the time a 'rising popularity' among Vietnamese worshippers. The Vietnamese press, according to *Indochine-Inde*, ran a series of hysterical but conflicting headlines: 'An Indian after having stroked a young Annamite girl hit her violently'; 'At the *Bà Đen* pagoda in Saigon an Indian tried to rape a young girl of 13 years old'; 'The Indians of the pagoda in Amiral Roze street hit two young girls'; 'A young girl was brutalised by the Indians'. In the version of events reported by *Indochine-Inde* itself, when the guard had asked the girls not to bring the young children they were carrying into the shrine, they had yelled abuse at him. He threw them out of the temple whereupon they continued to cause a scandal and invent stories.⁶⁸⁴

Yet another incident occurred with a similar narrative in the imperial city of Hue, in Annam, in 1937. According to French Security reports on the incident, a Vietnamese woman caught stealing from a 'Bombay' shop in that city had shouted to attract passers-by with claims that she had been abused by the shop's manager. Demonstrations were mounted immediately with stones thrown at the shop. In the days that followed a more organised group of some 2000 students gathered to shout 'Expel the *Bombay*,

⁶⁸³ 'Des Annamites agressent un marchand musulman', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 29 June 1928; and 'Antagonisme de races? Des annamites agressent un marchand musulman pour se venger de la brutalité commise par celui et contre l'un d'eux', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 25 June 1928.

⁶⁸⁴ 'A propos d'un incident qui se serait produit à la pagoda de la rue Amiral Roze', *Indochine-Inde*, 30 August 1936.

useless to society!'. The students also addressed a telegramme to the Governor General pleading: 'Please intervene immediately, huge demonstration amassed Hue against *Hindou* brutalities towards *Annamite* women'. Posters appeared inciting the population to boycott the 'Bombay' stores: 'We must end all our relations with the Bombay store. They come here only to beg in an indirect way and to live off the blood of the people of Annam. Despite this, they dare to look for trouble. For our honour and for that of future generations we must expel them from the territory of Hue, cutting all relations with them.' French security agents, who followed the trouble closely, claimed that the group of Vietnamese communists around the Saigon newspaper *La Lutte* were behind the demonstrations.⁶⁸⁵

Of note in all of these incidents taken together is how tensions present between Indians and the local community could so quickly turn to open conflict. Vietnamese reactions to the Chettiar foreclosure of loans with the onset of the economic depression in 1929-1930 further soured Vietnamese relations with resident Indians. If Vietnamese responses to the Chettiar presence were subdued prior to the economic crisis, the Indian moneylenders were vilified thereafter. A 1929 image of a Chetty 'monster' squeezing the life from a Vietnamese borrower is typical.⁶⁸⁶ So too is the tone found in a 1937 petition, addressed by the 'native modest-earners of Indochina' (*gagne-petits indigènes de l'Indochine*) to the French Minister of Colonies. In the petition their disdain for the 'coloured lenders' who 'make a profession of sucking human blood' is unrestrained: 'throughout Indochina, in every language of the Union they are called 'vampires', which proves their voracity and their ferocious appetite'.⁶⁸⁷

The most troubled incidents between Vietnamese and Indian migrants at grassroots level appear as tales of accusation and bitter counter-accusation. However, the undeniable animosity present in these stories must be tempered by evidence of other spheres in which they interacted more peaceably and outside of the bounds of relationships regulated by colonialism.

⁶⁸⁵ ANOM GGI65457 Notes mensuelles Surêté Annam, 1937; On *La Lutte* see Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt Nam de 1940 à 1952*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952, pp. 67-69.

⁶⁸⁶ *La Presse Indochinoise*, 20 September 1929.

⁶⁸⁷ VNA2 GD2990 Chettys, Dossier de principe 1937.

Religious accommodation

There are several examples of Vietnamese accommodation of Indian religious practices, and of Indian expressions of interest in indigenous local religious practices. Whatever the truth of events that spurred the confrontation between local Vietnamese and overseas Indians at Saigon's Amiral Roze Street Temple in 1936, the conflict must be viewed within the context of religious syncretism. It is significant that when the altercation between two Vietnamese girls and a 'Bengali' guard occurred, the girls were not passing by a place marked off as 'foreign' to them. Rather, they were about to enter the temple, most probably with the intention of praying to the overseas Indians' Hindu goddess.

It was at the this temple dedicated to Mariamman in central Saigon that the most lively interactions between local Cochinchinese and overseas Indians occurred. The temple became increasingly popular in the first half of the twentieth century with both Vietnamese and Khmer. Vietnamese in Cochinchina considered Mariamman, a 'dark' and powerful goddess attributed in southern India with powers over the spread of smallpox, to be the Indian embodiment of a local deity, the 'Black Lady' (*Bà Đen*) of their own popular religious belief.⁶⁸⁸ The Mariamman temple also attracted worshippers from the city's Khmer population. Indeed, the Vietnamese absorption of Khmer practices of Hinduism provided the link between *Bà Đen* and the Indian Hindu deity.⁶⁸⁹ This attachment to the worship of Mariamman as *Bà Đen* has survived, and is being vigorously revived in the present day.

The local Cochinchinese were also attracted to the practices of Indians of other faiths. The worship of the Muslim 'saint' Bava Bilal, who is buried in Cantho's Tamil

⁶⁸⁸ Nguyễn Phương Thảo, 'Văn hóa dân gian miền Nam Việt Nam [The Culture of Worship in the South of Vietnam]', [no publisher or place of publication given], 1997, p. 214.

⁶⁸⁹ On Vietnamese absorption and adaptation of Khmer deities, see L. Malleret, 'Cochinchine, terre inconnue', *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises*, no. 18, vol. 3, 1943, 9-26; L. Malleret, *L'Archéologie du delta du Mékong*, Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, 1959. See also Thảo, 'Văn hóa dân gian', pp 185, 214, and Taylor, *Goddess*, p. 3, 82.

Muslim cemetery, was adopted by both the Muslim Cham and the Vietnamese of the Mekong Delta. Although there exists little historical documentation about Bava Bilal, descendants of Indo-Vietnamese families claim he was an Arab or Indian merchant who gained extraordinary powers upon his death. The practice of invoking his assistance included, up until the 1970s, an annual festival which attracted fervents of his powers from across the Mekong Delta. This practice survives in the present, albeit in more limited form.⁶⁹⁰

Indications that Indians, for their part, could participate in local forms of devotion are evident in the generous donations given by Chettiar and other Tamil businessmen to the renovation of the mausoleum of General Lê Văn Duyệt in the late 1930s. Lê Văn Duyệt (1764-1832) served as Emperor Gia Long's viceroy in the south, before the region came under centralised control. His mausoleum stands near to Bà Chiểu market on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City. Tamil reverence for Lê Văn Duyệt was in keeping with that of Chinese migrants who propitiated the spirit of the general in the belief that in his death, as in his life, he continued to support their enterprises. One of the most generous donations, inscribed on a tablet in the mausoleum, came from the landowner and banker Appapoullé.⁶⁹¹

Finally, works chronicling 'miracles' witnessed at the Catholic pilgrimage site of La Vang in Annam include mention of Indian Catholics, upon whom the Virgin was said to have bestowed favours in the 1920s. The names of the Indians who travelled to La Vang (Lesage and Sandjivy) suggest that they were renouncers.⁶⁹²

Reactions to the prospect of kinship

The prospect of kinship with Indians stirred some of the deepest-rooted Vietnamese objections to the Indian presence. It is in stories which suggest conjugal or

⁶⁹⁰ Interviews Mr. Nhi, caretaker of Cantho cemetery, and descendants of Meydine family, Cantho and HCMC, April 2005.

⁶⁹¹ See Taylor, *Goddess*, pp. 77-78. I am grateful to Philip Taylor for drawing my attention to the names of Tamil benefactors inscribed in the mausoleum. See also Bùi Thị Ngọc Trang, *Lăng Tà Quân Lê Văn Duyệt*, HCM City: Nhà Xuất Bản Tổng Hợp, 2004.

⁶⁹² No author given, Mẹ Maria Lệnh Cho Ta Dùng Phương Pháp Cứu Rỗi Là Lân Hạt Mân Côi, www.dongcong.net/McMaria/ThangManCoi/12.htm.

other kinship relations between Vietnamese women and Indian men (I have seen no reference to unions between Indian women and local men) that specifically racial reactions emerge most strongly. These reactions show some Vietnamese convinced of their own racial superiority over the Indians, and over the darker-skinned Tamils in particular. Such prejudices, nonetheless, did not prevent mixed unions and other types of kinship ties from being forged.

Pierre Brocheux has maintained that Indian migrants were less well-accepted than Chinese immigrants within Cochinchinese society because, unlike the Chinese, 'they lacked the kinship relations that might have offset the indignities suffered by the Vietnamese as a result of the Chetty's money lending activities and economic exploitation'.⁶⁹³ When we examine in detail Vietnamese responses to unions with Indians, however, we find firstly that kinship ties, even though they were far less frequent than Vietnamese-Chinese unions, did indeed exist, and secondly that these ties aggravated, rather than offset, Vietnamese antagonisms towards Indians in Cochinchina. This was particularly so when Indians attempted to go outside of the tolerable norms established for such unions.

Although it is a topic somewhat too large and complex for the scope of this discussion, the prevalence of mixed unions between Indians (or at least Tamils) and local Cochinchinese (or at least Vietnamese) was probably linked to two factors. For some migrants more than others, the possibility of marrying a 'customary' choice of partner became more restricted by the sojourn overseas. The importance of marrying within one's own circle was also more important for some groups of overseas Tamils than for others. Adherence to concepts of ritual pollution distinguished legitimate from illegitimate unions more firmly for some migrants than for others. Catholic renouncers from the elite (that is, those originating from high caste backgrounds, even if they had, in principle, renounced their caste labels) rarely took local partners and it was considered to be something of a scandal when they did.⁶⁹⁴ Instead, they preferred marriages within

⁶⁹³ Brocheux, *Mekong Delta*, pp. 102-103.

⁶⁹⁴ Interview Lourdes Louis, Pondicherry, 22 November 2004; Interview Jeannot Beauvallon, Pondicherry, October 2004.

clans or between allied clans, even when these marriages were so close as to be inadmissible, strictly speaking, according the French Civil Code which they had legally embraced.⁶⁹⁵ These marriage practices were facilitated by the benefits of free passage and paid leave which many of the Catholic elite enjoyed in their positions within the Cochinchinese administration.

Similarly, Nattukottai Chettiar marriages to local women were virtually unheard of. 'Legitimate' marriage in Chettiar terms occurred strictly within the caste and between its nine clans, requiring the receipt of a garland from one of the nine clan temples. These practices guaranteed that any union outside of the caste would not be recognised within it. As particularly fervent caste Hindus, the bounds of possible partners was probably also regulated by notions of purity. Although Chettiars sometimes took concubines in Cochinchina, this was very infrequent.⁶⁹⁶

It was mostly South Indian Muslim migrants who formed mixed unions with local women in Cochinchina. The better-off among them often practiced 'double marriages', marrying once at home in India and taking another wife or partner in Indochina. The recognition of polygamy within Islamic law allowed South Indian Muslims to legitimately contract second marriages but it also served as a commercial strategy. The offspring of both marriages, moving between the two locations, were both immersed in their paternal heritage and (for male children) taught the family trade.⁶⁹⁷

Aside from wealthy Muslim traders who could afford to maintain two households, it was generally Indians of modest means (who were often also of lower caste or *pariah* status) who took wives or concubines locally. This included employees of Indian businesses and soldiers stationed in Indochina. The latter often stayed on past their military term to work in the administration or commercial enterprises.

⁶⁹⁵ Interviews Dr. Claude Marius, Pondicherry, 22 October 2004; Maurice Sinnas, Pondicherry, 24 November 2004.

⁶⁹⁶ S. Muthiah et al., *Chettiar Heritage*, pp. 152-155; Discussion Mrs. Meenakshi Meyappan, 28 September 2004; Interview R.M. Krishnanchettiar, Tiruchchirapalli, 27 September 2004.

⁶⁹⁷ Discussions Muntaz Alam, HCMC, January-February 1997; Interviews Abdul Gaffour, Pondicherry, 9 January 2002 and 11 October 2004; Interview Tony Bui, Pondicherry, 12 October 2004.

Tax farming too, often generated mixed unions, as it provided an opportunity for both the entrepreneurs and their Indian employees to strike up relationships with Vietnamese market vendors and other local women of modest means. Despite prejudices which Vietnamese freely expressed against such unions, the women themselves often saw the relationship as the path to an easier future.⁶⁹⁸

A civil case which was heard in the courts of Tourane in 1905 provides a good measure of the behavioural boundaries and the appropriate social contexts for unions between Indian men and Vietnamese women. It does so by recounting what happened when one Tamil trader, apparently obsessed with a young Vietnamese woman, went utterly against these norms.

In 1904, Aboubakare, a Tamil merchant based in Tourane, attempted to press adultery charges against his 'wife', claiming she had taken up with another man. His ostensible wife, Nguyen Thi Den, was a young woman of eighteen, a tobacco seller and the daughter of a relatively wealthy man who held the tax farm for the city's slaughterhouse. Aboubakare claimed to have married her in July 1904.

In their testimonies as they appear in the court transcripts, Nguyen Thi Den and her family insisted that she had never been married to Aboubakare. They made it clear they would have been opposed to such a union. The father told the court how Aboubakare, having trouble with his associates, had come to ask for help, and had been permitted to stay in a building adjacent to the family house for two months. But then, 'having learned that Aboubakare was telling everyone (Chinese and *Annamite*) that I had given him my daughter in marriage, I chased him from my premises, not wanting this rumour, which I considered to be scandalous, to last any longer'. He added, 'I would anyway be opposed to such a union because I consider this Indian to be a savage'. In her testimony his daughter spoke in similar terms: 'I would never consent to take Aboubakare for a husband because I find him too black'.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁸ Conversation with historian Dr. Đào Hùng, Hanoi, 10 July 2006.

⁶⁹⁹ VNA1 Tribunal de Paix de Tourane G.5 No 81. Plainte civile entre Lam Thi Huc, Nguyen Thi Den and Aboubakare au sujet de diffamation à Tourane 1905: Commissariat de la police, plainte contre Aboubakare, 27 May 1905.

Aboubakare's claim failed to hold up in court. He had no marriage papers to prove it, and his 'wife' maintained that in May of the same year she had married someone else, a young Vietnamese man by the name of Le Van Thai. Aboubakare then changed tack, accusing Den and her mother of defamation. He claimed the mother, Lam Thi Hue had appeared outside his door, a dog in hand, yelling: 'I brought this dog for Aboubakare to f... because he doesn't have a wife!'. 'This scandalous scene', it was noted in the court records, 'drew a considerable crowd in front of the shop'. The following day, Aboubakare claimed, Den herself appeared outside his house, screaming : 'F... your father, your mother, your family!'.⁷⁰⁰

Whether these scenes of obscenity, and pure rage, actually occurred is not firmly established in the court records. The family's fury at Aboubakare's advances on their daughter, however, is well evidenced elsewhere. According to Nguyen Thi Den's father, Aboubakare had appeared, sometime after he had been chased from the house, accompanied by four Vietnamese women carrying a plate of betel nuts. 'Asking them what this visit signified', the father related, 'they said they had come to ask, on behalf of Aboubakare, for my daughter's hand in marriage'. The father's testimony was corroborated by two of the women commissioned to enact Aboubakare's version of a Vietnamese betrothal. Den's mother, according to one of the betel-carriers 'flew into a violent rage, took a broom and chased Aboubakare away. Feeling ashamed, I left Hue's property immediately along with the three other women'.⁷⁰¹

In his conclusion, the judge reasoned that Aboubakare, obsessed with the young woman, had tried in his own way to charm her and her family into an agreement of marriage. When his charms could not carry him, he resorted to intimidation to prove she was his wife. Aboubakare had stayed long in the country, the judge resolved, and should have known of the prevailing norms, of 'the racial antagonism existing between his race

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.: Bailiff's report, 3 June 1905.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.: Commissariat de la police, plainte contre Aboubakare, 27 May 1905.

and the Annamite race, and that a native who is better-off would never consent to give his daughter's hand in marriage to a *Malabar*'.⁷⁰²

One article which appeared in Gilbert Chieu's *Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn* is an exception to the otherwise tempered responses to Indian economic dominance found in that newspaper. It provides another example of the racially-based horror embedded in the popular imagination of the period at the prospect of a *Chà* son-in-law. It describes the author's visit to an acquaintance in a rural town. Upon his arrival, the acquaintance announced that he had arranged for his daughter to be married and encouraged the author to stay the night in order to meet the prospective son-in-law. Greeted in the morning by the sight of what he refers to as a '*thằng Chà Và*' seated in a chair, he took him for a trader come to sell cloth. The use of *thằng*, the classifier for boys, is demeaning in this context. The author describes the Indian as 'the devil of thunder manifest on earth' (*thiên lôi giáng thế*). Discovering the Indian was the prospective son-in-law, he exhorted readers not to follow this model. 'It is better to marry [your daughter] to a poor Annamese', the article concluded, 'rather than to a *Chà Và* with wealth'.⁷⁰³

This type of resistance to the greater integration of Tamils into Indochinese society persisted through the 1920s and up to living memory. It weighed in the murder in February of 1923 of Francisque, a renounced Indian soldier of the 11th infantry stationed in Saigon. He was attacked and killed following an argument between the neighbour and his *congaie*, with whom he lived in the quarter of Dakao.⁷⁰⁴ An editorial which ran in the Franco-Tamil *Réveil Saigonnais* maintained, typically for the Republican stance of the newspaper, that colour should not enter into the question of the murder of a French soldier: 'Indochina is French territory. In the shadow of its flag, men of all colours stand guard'. Nonetheless the paper acknowledged: 'It occurs to us that this attack can be explained by the hatred that Annamites hold for black and brown soldiers'.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰² Ibid.: Judge's conclusions, n.d.

⁷⁰³ Thiên-hồ, 'Chàng Rể Chà', *LTTV* 34, p. 9. [reprinted in Son Nam, *Miền Nam*, pp. 287-288].

⁷⁰⁴ 'Un crime à Saigon. Le soldat Francisque tombe sous les coups d'une vengeance', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 6 February 1923.

⁷⁰⁵ 'Le Crime de Dakao', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 26 March 1923.

If the example above demonstrates how prejudices played out in the poorer classes of society, the more privileged were not unaffected by such attitudes. An historian who grew up in Hue in the 1940s has described how his mother's maid, from a very poor background, received an offer of marriage from Issoup, a Tamil cloth trader. His mother, considering this an excellent prospect for a simple girl, encouraged the maid and went so far as to organise the wedding. The maid, whose economic condition improved considerably through the match, kept in contact with her former employers. Occasionally her husband Issoup extended invitations to dinner. My informant's mother would attend, taking him as a young boy in tow, where he claimed to have developed a taste for curry. His father, however, would never demean himself to accept the Tamil's invitation: 'Indians were badly regarded, and he was an intellectual. The Vietnamese looked down on the Indians [at that time], considering them to be black'.⁷⁰⁶

I have spoken so far of the prejudices provoked by relationships created through marriage. But kinship between Indians and Vietnamese was not only generated through conjugal ties. In 1935, an ex-soldier living in Hanoi, who went by the name of Paul Louis Mariapragassam, applied for French naturalisation. Investigating his application, French authorities concluded that he was the same person as Nguyen Dinh Luy, a soldier who in the army had had himself 'recognised by a *Malabar*'. Paul Louis or Luy was said to have paid 200 piastres in 1921 to the renouncer Amaladassou Mariapragassam, originally from Karikal, who then officially registered Luy as his son. One hundred piastres was paid upfront, but the remainder was never collected as 'the Indian died that November'. As a French citizen, Paul Louis then earned four times his previous salary.

The process of 'recognition' (*reconnaissance*), the faculty in French law allowing men to declare their paternity over children born out of wedlock, was used in Indochina primarily by French men wishing to confer on their *métis* offspring the status of French citizen. It was occasionally subject to abuse, with Europeans selling their paternity to

⁷⁰⁶ Conversation with historian Dr. Đào Hùng, Hanoi, 10 July 2006.

Vietnamese desiring French citizenship.⁷⁰⁷ Indians from the French possessions had the same potential to easily engineer 'false recognitions', as they could, through renunciation, voluntarily obtain French citizenship. We can assume Amaladassou Mariapragassam was not the only one so tempted. This offsets the picture of racial prejudice described so far, to the extent that it demonstrates that Indians and Vietnamese collaborated in some contexts to their mutual benefit.

Paul Louis' file states: 'In his physical aspect he has all the traits common to the *Annamite* race'. It also contains the detail that he was rejected by his family because he had taken steps to be 'recognised as French by a *Malabar*'. He should have taken over the care of his family altar, it was noted, but was chased out by the family who would not accept that someone now related to an Indian could carry out the role of honouring the ancestors.

Similarly in doubt was the real identity of Paul Louis' five children. They were named in the document as Jeanne, Anne, Jules, Valle, and Lanne, and also used the surname Mariapragassam. Paul Louis' application for naturalisation was prompted by his loss of French citizenship; he had been stripped of his citizenship when he had fraudulently adopted two 'children' who had already reached their majority.

It is fitting that Paul Louis Mariapregassam's application for naturalisation was reviewed by a renounced Indian. The two words written at the bottom of Paul Louis' application ('Noted, Ratinassamy') were pencilled by the chief of Hanoi's registration office, Louis Ratinassamy. Ratinassamy has left us no further trace, unfortunately, of his views on this affair. His signature on this document, however, shows that renouncers were engaged in serving French interests in Indochina to the very extent that they were part of the bureaucracy monitoring Vietnamese applications for naturalisation.

⁷⁰⁷ Stoler analyses European anxieties created by the practice: Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, pp. 91-96; Saada describes legal controls introduced in the French colonies, in contradiction to metropolitan law, to attempt to eradicate it: Saada, *Les Enfants*, pp. 137-163.

Conclusion

Vietnamese reacted to the Indian presence in a variety of contexts, and in a number of different ways, but all reflect how Indian emigrants influenced the Vietnamese experience of French colonialism. Early reformers such as Gilbert Chiếu resented the riches made by Indian and Chinese businessmen in the south, but were concerned with copying them in order to capitalise themselves on the gains the foreign entrepreneurs had made in the course of French expansion. The French-educated elite of the 1920s expressed frustration at the privileges and powers enjoyed by Indian French citizens in Cochinchina. The privileges willingly accorded on Cochinchinese soil to renounced Indians in the face of their own similar but unfulfilled demands, made a mockery in their eyes of the notion of a *mission civilisatrice* and of genuine government support for 'native' progress. Anti-Indian feeling at grassroots level stemmed from specific types of contact between local Cochinchinese and Indians working in the colony in a variety of occupations. Indian interactions with local people were not confined to commercial or administrative contacts though. Evidence of more positive exchanges in the context of religious belief, as well as harsh Vietnamese judgements of mixed marriage, form part of the catalogue of grassroots reactions.

The heightened atmosphere of animosity between Vietnamese and overseas Indians from the late 1920s and through the 1930s left little room for distinctions to be made between one overseas Indian and another. As a part of their wider reaction to Vietnamese anti-colonialism, renouncers became increasingly aware of this slippage. They began to recognise that their reputation was linked to that of the Muslims traders, the Chettiar money lenders and other overseas Indians in the colony who, despite daily contacts within Saigon's Tamil community, they had previously set apart from themselves. Vietnamese criticisms levelled against the Indian presence in the 1920s and 1930s led Indian French citizens to sense that they were viewed as part of the 'problem'. The attempts of renounced Indians and their supporters to counter view is the subject of the chapter which follows.

Chapter Seven: Raising the *Hindou* Profile

Having gained the exercise in the colony of their rights as French citizens (albeit with some reservations) the renounced Indians of Cochinchina began in the interwar period to be faced, by virtue of the very position which they had fought for so vehemently in the late 1880s and early 1900s, with some uncomfortable realities. The public sector became less secure as a niche of employment for renounced Indians, even though the 1920s was otherwise a decade of prosperity. A new class of French-educated Vietnamese, their rise fostered by Governor General Sarraut's policy of 'Franco-*Annamite* collaboration', now competed with the renouncers for jobs.⁷⁰⁸ As we have seen, members of this same class, Vietnamese 'bourgeois' moderates led by the Constitutionalist Party, began to question openly the participation of renounced Indians in the political and administrative life of Cochinchina. Reforms of the administration by the succeeding Governor General Varenne further threatened renouncer employment and in particular the positions of those employed at the lowest levels.⁷⁰⁹ By the 1930s, the increasing radicalisation of Vietnamese anti-colonial politics along with the effects of the economic depression of the 1930s hardened attitudes towards migrants from India.

Renouncers reacted to these interwar pressures with conscious efforts to raise their own profile and to thereby lend purpose to their presence in Cochinchina. These ideas were generated from locally-based social organisations, and the small but vibrant Franco-Tamil press, which by the 1920s brought together all French citizens of Indian origin, both renounced Indians and the Indo-French, as the *Français de l'Inde*, the French of India. In their efforts to raise the '*hindou* profile' in Cochinchina, the *Français de l'Inde* put forward notions of themselves as modern, dynamic and forward-looking. They depicted themselves as a people with a future in the colony, but a people too, with a meaningful presence in Indochina which was deeply rooted in the past. Finally, they

⁷⁰⁸ Agathe Larcher, 'La voie étroite des réformes coloniales et la 'collaboration franco-annamite' (1917-1928)', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre mer*, vol. 82, no. 309, 1995, 387-420.

⁷⁰⁹ See 'La question des facteurs indiens', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 12 August 1925; Edouard Marquis, 'Le Problème Hindou', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 18 November 1924; Edouard Marquis, 'Lettre ouverte à mes compatriotes', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 15 May 1929.

began to alter their view of themselves, no longer conceiving of themselves as Indians whose French citizenship was the foremost aspect of their identities, but as a larger 'Indian' social unit whose good name they needed to first rescue, then nurture and protect in order to ensure their continued survival in Cochinchina and Indochina more widely. At the same time that renounced Indians were engaged in Saigon in these profile raising exercises, though, they were caught up in internal conflicts played out through their social organisations.

In this chapter I examine how the renounced Indians of Cochinchina, and the somewhat wider group of expatriate *Français de l'Inde*, shaped a vision of themselves in the 1920s and 1930s as established residents deserving of a rightful place in the colony. This vision was directed outwards to an audience of Europeans, French-educated Vietnamese, and other cosmopolitan residents of the colony. Yet, as their internal disagreements show, even as renounced Indians and their Indo-French compatriots made such public pronouncements, the convictions that had made of renouncers such powerful agents in colonial Cochinchina for over half a century – their commitment to achieving full French citizenship in a French empire which was to be the fulfilment of a cosmopolitan ideal – began to be overtaken by other social and political priorities.

Channels of expression

Locally-based social organisations, and a small but active Franco-Tamil press were two closely-linked sources whose appearance owed much to the wider development of a Vietnamese public sphere in urban Saigon from the 1920s.⁷¹⁰ Although renouncers resident in Cochinchina had begun to form friendly societies and other social organisations in the 1900s, their activities intensified in the inter-war period. In the same period two French-language Saigon-based newspapers came into their own as organs which both catered to a French-speaking Indian readership, and defended the interests of

⁷¹⁰ See Peycam, 'Intellectuals and Political Commitment'; Shawn Frederick MacHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004; also Alexander Woodside, 'The Development of Social Organizations in Vietnamese Cities in the Late Colonial Period', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1971, 39-64 (p. 39).

French citizens of Indian origin (renouncers and Indo-French) and later, expatriate Indians more generally.

Between the turn of the twentieth century and the outbreak of World War Two, no less than thirteen social organisations were founded in Cochinchina to cater solely to the expatriate *Français de l'Inde* (see Appendix III). Barring two sporting societies, all of these organisations were registered as mutual aid societies, and all were based in Saigon. A sporting society in Haiphong, circa 1937, is the only remaining evidence that Indians elsewhere in Indochina organised themselves in a similar manner.⁷¹¹ These organisations were frequently short-lived. None, with one exception, continued to operate for more than five years after its founding.⁷¹² And none ever boasted more than a maximum of 200 members.⁷¹³

Most societies formed in the early years for the 'French of India' required members to be French citizens.⁷¹⁴ Surviving membership lists show societies with a majority of renouncers (about three quarters) and a smaller number of Indo-French.⁷¹⁵ By the late 1920s, these societies were less concerned about whether their members actually held French citizenship. French subjects were now also admitted to some organisations although renouncers remained the vast majority.⁷¹⁶

Mutual associations in Cochinchina were formed within a French legal framework, and like their metropolitan cousins, provided to members a financial and moral safety net.⁷¹⁷ The Cochinchinese societies were financed through membership fees

⁷¹¹ 'Le décès et les obsèques de Jules Mongro', *Indochine-Inde*, 4 April 1937.

⁷¹² 'Union Amicale Indo-Française', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 28 November 1919; 'Union Amicale Indo-Française', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 7 August 1932.

⁷¹³ VNA2 GD2997 Mutuelle Hindoue de la Cochinchine, 1935: Annual Bulletin of the Mutuelle Hindoue of the Mutuelle Hindoue 1935.

⁷¹⁴ VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0810 Sociétés...Société Indo-Française de la Cochinchine: 'Société de Secours Mutuels des Indiens en Cochinchine', Statutes 1903; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0215 Sociétés 1902-1909... Syndicat des Français de l'Inde, 1907: Statutes 1907; 'Union Amicale Indo-française', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 25 November 1919; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0213 Sociétés 1902-1911...Association Sportive Hindoue.

⁷¹⁵ VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0215: Statutes, 1907.

⁷¹⁶ VNA2 GD2997: subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue', Statutes of the *Mutualité Hindoue*, 1932; VNA2 GD2998 Mutuelle des Indo-Français employés de Commerce et d'Industrie, 1934: Statutes 1934; No author, *La Mutuelle Hindoue de Cochinchine, Société de Secours Mutuels, Statuts*, Saigon: Imprimerie Joseph Viet, 1935; VNA2 GD2997: Annual Bulletin of the Mutuelle Hindoue 1935.

⁷¹⁷ On mutual societies in France see Paul Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. See also Erica J. Peters, 'Resistance, Rivalries

and a portion of takings from a 'Mutual lottery' and charity fêtes.⁷¹⁸ They were legally bound to remain both apolitical and secular, although the Indian societies did not adhere strictly to either stipulation.⁷¹⁹

The stated aim of most of the Indian social organisations was to prevent destitution among compatriots resident in Cochinchina. The formation of the earliest associations coincided with a time when arrivals from the French Establishments, particularly renouncers spurred by prospects in the administration of the newer colony, had begun to exceed the number of vacant positions.⁷²⁰ The force of the 1930s Depression brought the role of the societies in mutual assistance again to the fore.⁷²¹ One of the main reasons for the 1935 merger of the *Mutualité Hindoue* and the *Mutuelle des Indo-Français Employés de Commerce et d'Industrie* was to better protect compatriots who were 'no longer able to make ends meet with their reduced salaries' or were 'out on the street'.⁷²²

The leaders of some of the earliest Indian social organisations were respected renouncers within Tamil business circles. Louis Sinnaya, the legal clerk and 'entrepreneur of public services', who later ran printing presses in both Saigon and Pondicherry, was the founding president of the *Société de Secours Mutuels des Indiens en Cochinchine*.⁷²³ Behind the *Syndicat des Français de l'Inde* was the banker and landowner Ra-Soccalingam.⁷²⁴ Other renouncers created themselves through their very involvement with associations. Although neither had a particularly remarkable career in Cochinchina, Symphorien Lami and Lourdes Nadin both made their names through their

and Restaurants: Vietnamese Workers in Interwar France', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, 109-143 (p. 139).

⁷¹⁸ VNA2 GD2997: subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue', Statutes, 1932.

⁷¹⁹ See for example VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0215: Statutes Syndicat des Indiens Français, 12 July 1907; no author, *La Mutualité Hindoue: Statuts*, Saigon: Imprimerie Nguyen-Kha, 1932.

⁷²⁰ ANOM GGI2276 Rapatriement des Indigents provenant de l'Inde, de la Réunion et de la Corse, 1908: Lt GCCH to GGI, 1 May 1908; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0810: Draft statutes Société Indo-Française de la Cochinchine, 1901; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0215: Statutes Syndicat des Français de l'Inde, 12 July 1907.

⁷²¹ VNA2 GD2997: Belconde to GCCH, 29 October 1929; Ibid.: Statutes *Mutualité Hindoue*, 1932; VNA2 GD2998 *Mutuelle des Indo-Français employés de Commerce et d'Industrie*, 1934: Statutes 1934.

⁷²² Ibid.: 'Rapport Morale' 1935.

⁷²³ VNA2 SL4585 Demande de réhabilitation formulée par M. SINNAYA (Louis) demeurant à Saigon 1902; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0810; Pourouchotman Tamby, *British raj et swaraj*. Pondicherry: L. Sinnaya Press, 1918.

⁷²⁴ VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0215.

work with associations, in Saigon and elsewhere. Both were duly awarded, among other accolades, with 'Bronze Medal for Mutuality' in 1935 (see Plates 14 and 15).⁷²⁵

With the development of a Franco-Tamil press in Saigon, publicists too began to play prominent roles in the Indian social organisations. From its outset, the society *Solidarité* received support and publicity from Edouard Marquis at the *Réveil Saigonnais*.⁷²⁶ The *Mutuelle des Indo-Français Employés de Commerce et d'Industrie* was founded through a campaign led by Raoul Vernier of the *Saigon-Dimanche* to protest the exclusion of Indians from the larger European-dominated Association for Employees of Commerce and Industry.⁷²⁷

Edouard Marquis and Raoul Vernier were leading figures in the publication of Saigon's two 'Franco-Tamil' newspapers. The two French language publications, *Réveil Saigonnais* (1907-1929) and *Saigon-Dimanche* (1927-1935) overtly supported Indian interests in the colony. The latter newspaper was subsequently renamed *Indochine-Inde* (1936-1937) and then *Indōśjin-Indiyā* (published in Tamil, 1939-1941). While these newspapers were instrumental in the founding of some of the French Indian social organisations, they also provided sustenance for many others, publishing the proceedings of their meetings and conferences. These were joined by a third, short-lived, Tamil newspaper entitled *Saigon Vartamany*, of which little record has survived.⁷²⁸

Réveil Saigonnais, the longest-running of Saigon's Franco-Tamil newspapers, was established by Rose Quaintenne, a French woman of metropolitan origin, who owned and served as editor for the newspaper's first fourteen years. She had spent several years in Pondicherry where her husband, Victor Quaintenne, had been leader of Pondicherry's *Parti Français*, a representative on the local council, and an avid defender of the

⁷²⁵ VNA2 GD2997: Annual Bulletin of the Mutuelle Hindoue 1935.

⁷²⁶ 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 June 1923.

⁷²⁷ R.V., 'A ceux qu'on ne défend pas : Employés de commerce Français de l'Inde groupez-vous!', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 18 September 1927.

⁷²⁸ Ho Tai's claims that Camille Delivar's *Temps d'Asie* was a similar Franco-Tamil newspaper and that Marquis was a pseudonym for Devilar cannot be substantiated. (Ho Tai, *Radicalism*, p. 123). On *Saigon Vartamany* and editor S. Samou see 'Un confrère tamoul', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 26 August 1928; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0213: calling card of S. Samou; 'Amicale des Français de l'Inde, banquet d'au revoir', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 25 June 1910.

renouncers against the supposed electoral and political manipulations of Mayor Chanemougan.⁷²⁹ Victor died shortly after the couple's move to Indochina, but Rose remained in Saigon with her three children. There she sidestepped convention both by remaining in the colony once widowed, and building for herself a respectable career.⁷³⁰ She worked on the *Opinion* before starting up the *Réveil Saigonnais*, billed in its early years as a 'political, commercial, literary and worldly organ'.⁷³¹

Although the *Réveil Saigonnais* did not state outright its defence of renouncer interests until the 1920s, it published articles and put forward views prior to the First World War which were clearly intended to attract a readership of French-speaking Indians and to appeal to renouncers' political views. It commented on politics in French India, defending renouncers against Chanemougan's views.⁷³² It also put forward a position on the British presence in India, (one which sat comfortably both with French colonialists and Indians loyal to France alike), which compared British oppression unfavourably with a French policy of assimilation in its Indian *comptoirs*.⁷³³ The *Réveil* also favoured social progress in India and the abandonment of 'outdated' customs.⁷³⁴

From around 1910 the *Réveil Saigonnais* began to forge links with emerging Indian social organisations. Notices submitted by the associations announcing upcoming meetings, or covering events held in honour of prominent members attest to this.⁷³⁵ The newspaper also began to facilitate the involvement of Indian French citizens in Cochinchinese electoral politics by publishing pieces underlining then Deputy Deloncle's commitment to renounced Indians' interests in Cochinchina.⁷³⁶

⁷²⁹ See Weber, *Pondichéry*, pp. 221, 258, 264, 268.

⁷³⁰ On the 'rigorous norms' ruling lives of single European women in the colonies see Stoler *Carnal Knowledge*, p. 61. The 'colonial widow...the editor of a major Saigon daily', cited by Stoler as the rare exception to the rule was undoubtedly Quaintenne herself.

⁷³¹ Edouard Marquis, 'A nos Abonnés et Lecteurs', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 31 December 1921.

⁷³² Rose Quaintenne, 'Chanemougan est un Sénateur au crampon', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 26 May 1908.

⁷³³ Rose Quaintenne, 'Les soulèvements de l'Inde', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 20 August 1910.

⁷³⁴ 'L'émancipation des veuves hindoues', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 17 September 1910.

⁷³⁵ For example 'Amicale des Français de l'Inde, banquet d'au revoir', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 25 June 1910.

⁷³⁶ 'Un lien Pondichéry-Inde' *Réveil Saigonnais*, 2 February 1910; Rose Quaintenne, 'Banquet donné par M. Ra-Soccalingam en l'honneur de M. François Deloncle', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 16 April 1910.

. When Rose Quaintenne died suddenly in 1921, Edouard Marquis assumed the post of editor. He was by his own description a 'native of Pondicherry', and was probably of mixed Indian and French parentage.⁷³⁷ Trained as a doctor in India, his desire to enlist during the First World War had brought him to Cochinchina where he was employed on military convoys, tending to the health of Vietnamese workers transported between Saigon and Marseille. He was subsequently employed as a medical officer on the prison island of Poulo Condore.⁷³⁸ Dissatisfied at his inability to advance (his Pondicherry medical qualification was not fully recognised in Cochinchina), Marquis put aside medicine in 1921. He worked briefly in the Saigon Public Library, but swiftly found a place for himself in journalism.⁷³⁹

Rose Quaintenne's funeral in December of 1921 was both a tribute to her attachment to French India and a marker of the direction the newspaper was more firmly to take. An elegy was delivered by the businessman Xavier de Condappa on behalf of the *Amicale de l'Inde*. She 'never hid her sympathy for us', he declared, 'her last lines, even, were devoted to the defence of the French of India'.⁷⁴⁰ Edouard Marquis penned her obituary and assumed provisional direction of the newspaper upon her death. He cannot have been employed more than six months with the *Réveil* at the time.⁷⁴¹

Under Marquis' editorship, the *Réveil Saigonnais* began more regularly and more overtly to defend renouncer interests, and those of a broader readership of *Français de l'Inde*, and showed signs that it now had a large and loyal following. From 1922 it routinely printed stories defending the interests in the colony of French citizens of Indian origin, regular columns with news from the French Establishments, analyses of nationalism in British India and articles which advocated the advance of 'progress' in India. Announcements of the births, deaths and marriages of renouncers and Indo-French alike – some of which had taken place in Indochina, others in India – dominated the 'classifieds' section of the newspaper. As we have seen the *Réveil* under Marquis was

⁷³⁷ 'Mes chers compatriotes', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 17 April 1929.

⁷³⁸ ANOM GGI33987 M. Marquis (Edouard) engagé comme Agent sanitaire contractuel à Saigon-Cholon, 1925 [sic]: Marquis to GGI, 10 October 1921.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.: Note Cabinet GGI to Secretary General, 8 August 1921.

⁷⁴⁰ A series of twelve articles by Quaintenne, entitled 'Nos Etablissements français dans l'Inde' appeared in the months before her death.

⁷⁴¹ Edouard Marquis, 'A nos abonnés et lecteurs: Obsèques de notre Directrice', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 31 December 1921.

also responsible for the creation of one Indian mutual association, *Solidarité*.⁷⁴² It also became deeply involved in political lobbying, following local and legislative elections and promoting the career of Ernest Outrey in his heyday as Cochinchina's Deputy. 'The interventions of Ernest Outrey' on behalf of Cochinchina's Indian French citizens were published faithfully, and most notably around the time of legislative elections. Outrey himself was close to the newspaper in more ways than one, having himself acted as editor for a brief period prior to Marquis, in 1921.

The *Réveil*'s involvement in political lobbying reached its logical conclusion in May 1929 when Marquis himself ran for a seat on the Municipal council. His platform was the defence of the *colonie hindoue* or more precisely the Indian *petits fonctionnaires* who stood to lose their positions through Varenne's policy of opening the ranks of 'French' cadres to non-naturalised Vietnamese.⁷⁴³ Marquis' was defeated at the polls, and this, as well as the bleak financial outlook, probably both had a role to play in the demise of the *Réveil Saigonnais* a month later, in June of 1929.⁷⁴⁴

Saigon-Dimanche had appeared, however, in July of 1927, some eighteen months before the *Réveil Saigonnais* ceased publication. It was edited by Raoul (Ramraja) Vernier, a Saigon-born renounced Indian of Hindu faith. Vernier ran a printing press (Imprimerie R. Vernier) while publishing the paper.⁷⁴⁵ He was replaced during his occasional absences from the country by Samy Abraham. Abraham, most likely a renounced Catholic, had abandoned his training in law to follow his ambitions as a journalist and writer of fiction.⁷⁴⁶

If the *Réveil Saigonnais* was more overtly supportive of French Indian causes once Edouard Marquis took over, the *Saigon-Dimanche* was even more willing to declare

⁷⁴² 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 June 1923.

⁷⁴³ 'Elections municipales du 5 mai 1929', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 14 April 1929.

⁷⁴⁴ Edouard Marquis, 'Lettre ouverte à mes compatriotes', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 15 May 1929; 'A nos lecteurs', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 27 June 1929.

⁷⁴⁵ Advertisement for 'Imprimerie R. Vernier', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 19 March 1932; 'Hindoue Tamoule Djana Sangam, Amicale Hindoue', *Indochine-Inde*, 8 March 1936; Raoul Vernier, 'Dernier appel à mes compatriotes', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 30 April 1933.

⁷⁴⁶ 'Une oeuvre de M. Samy Abraham', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 30 November 1930.

itself as the voice of French citizens of Indian origin resident in Cochinchina. Like the *Réveil*, the *Saigon-Dimanche* published reports from India and supported the French of India's social organisations in Saigon. It too, came to the defence of the *Français de l'Inde* in the colony, but it did so more regularly and with a greater sense of purpose than the *Réveil*, most notably in the concerted campaigns it launched in support of Indian *petit fonctionnaires* employed within the Cochinchinese administration.

Saigon-Dimanche was also more forcefully involved in local politics than the *Réveil*. It ended the practice whereby Cochinchinese Deputies used the Franco-Tamil press to court the Indian electorate, by leading the charge in the later 1920s and early 1930s of Indian voters disillusioned by their long-standing supporter, Deputy Ernest Outrey.⁷⁴⁷ This was coupled with a press campaign, to 'fight to the death the odious legend' of Indian electoral venality.⁷⁴⁸

Yet while *Saigon-Dimanche* did not follow slavishly the 'interventions' of the colonial Deputy in the manner of the *Réveil*, it continued to use political channels to lobby for the welfare of Indian French citizens in Cochinchina.⁷⁴⁹ Like Marquis before him, Vernier too ran for municipal council, seeking to continue his 'action' in favour of his 'compatriots the *Français de l'Inde*' by putting himself forward for the Municipal council election of May 1933. Unlike Marquis, he won a seat as councillor.⁷⁵⁰ The message of thanks he penned to his supporters reads like a declaration of the death of the Deputy as the manipulator of the Indian vote. Claiming to his readership to be the 'first of your kind' to serve as a councillor in the Saigon municipality (the term of Douressamy-Naiker in the late 1880s by then long forgotten), he claimed the Mayor elect (Marc Casati on whose list Vernier ran) would now 'compensate for the deficiencies and the silence of the Deputy of Cochinchina' by coming to the defence of Saigon's resident Indian French

⁷⁴⁷ 'M. Outrey n'a pas payé sa dette aux électeurs français originaires de l'Inde', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 20 April 1928; R. Vernier, 'M. Outrey, les Français de l'Inde ne méritent pas l'affront que vous leur faites!', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 21 April 1932.

⁷⁴⁸ Raoul Vernier, 'Dernier appel', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 30 April 1933.

⁷⁴⁹ 'Notre Programme', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 3 July 1927.

⁷⁵⁰ Raoul Vernier, 'Appel aux amis de *Saigon-Dimanche* et à mes compatriotes', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 24 April 1933.

citizens.⁷⁵¹ Although there is no record of any triumph on the part of Casati in this regard, Vernier's words show how the relationship between Deputy and Indian voters had irrevocably changed.

The *Saigon-Dimanche* was not only more strident than the *Réveil* in its efforts to present itself as spokesman for the *Français de l'Inde* in Cochinchina. It was also more willing to show itself as a more broadly 'Indian' newspaper, depicting and appealing to an Indian expatriate community made up not only of renounced Indians, or Indians from the French possessions, but overseas Indians of all creeds. A regular feature was a listing of all the Indian places of worship in Saigon and Cholon. It took a greater interest than its competitor in the numerous Indian visitors, many of them politically-minded figures, who were beginning to pass through Saigon in this period and who were eager to impart their views to their compatriots overseas. And it came to the defence of Indians who did not necessarily have any French connection or loyalty, speaking out in favour (as I shall examine later) both of (British) Muslim merchants and Chettiar moneylenders. An Indian, or more often specifically Tamil, cultural allegiance was openly displayed, in notices advertising everything from the latest Tamil music just arrived at Saigon's biggest department store, to troupes of visiting Tamil performers, to local Indian restaurants and suppliers of curry powders, chutneys, and palm toddy (see Plates 16 and 17). The newspaper's first relaunch in the late 1930s as *Indochine-Inde* confirmed its decidedly more Indian perspective, while its second relaunch in Tamil as *Indōsjin-Indiyā* made clear that its Indian interests represented those more precisely of the expatriate majority in Cochinchina, the ethnic Tamils. Publication ended altogether in April 1941.

The close interlinking of Indian social organisations and the Franco-Tamil press were crucial in renouncers' interwar efforts, which I now examine, to 'raise the *hindou* profile' in Cochinchina.

⁷⁵¹ ANOM FM Indo AF53: Laurans to Sen EFI, 15 March 1888; Raoul Vernier, 'Mes remerciements', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 7 May 1933.

Modern men, historical purpose

In one respect the *Français de l'Inde* in Cochinchina in the interwar years were no different from their moderate and modernist Vietnamese counterparts, or 'progressive' colonised people elsewhere in Southeast Asia in this period, in their eagerness to portray themselves as a dynamic, forward-looking, and unified group.⁷⁵² The messages the French of India put out were undoubtedly intended to assure French authorities that they were respectable, modern men worthy of their trust. They were also an attempt to find common ground with Cochinchina's own growing moderate and modern middle class.

Like these other groups, French citizens of Indian origin actively sought to improve the caliber of their youth both intellectually and physically, through activities ranging from vocational training, discussions and conference on modern subjects such as hygiene and childrearing, to participation in sports.⁷⁵³ Characteristic of modernist ideas at the time, they very consciously subscribed to the idea that progressive colonised peoples were engaged, indeed had a duty to engage, in a race to better themselves. This element of their thinking emerges clearly in exhortations to participate in competitive sport. In 1931 an article in *Saigon-Dimanche* urged 'all young *Français de l'Inde* who are no less worthy of their race than the Metropolitans, the *Annamites* or the Chinese of their own' to 'found a *hindou* Sporting Union!'.⁷⁵⁴ It can be found too in reports of the sporting achievements both of Indochina's expatriate Indians and those at home in India. Local tennis star James Samuel, of Pondicherry stock, was gleefully reported to have 'crushed' his French opponent in the 1933 Tonkin interclub final, while aviator Avadiappachettiar, visiting Saigon in 1933 was lauded as 'a magnificent example of modern *hindou* youth: evolved, educated and courageous. Indifferent to none of civilisation's technical

⁷⁵² See Peter Zinoman, 'Vũ Trọng Phụng's *Dumb Luck* and the nature of Vietnamese Modernism', introduction to Vũ Trọng Phụng, *Dumb Luck*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002; Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies, The Fall of British India, 1941-1945* Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. 30-70.

⁷⁵³ For examples see *La Mutualité Hindoue: Société d'entre-aide et de protection fondée à Saigon le 6 mai 1928*. Saigon Imprimerie Nguyen Kha 1932; VNA2 GD2997: Statutes of *Mutualité Hindoue*, 1932; 'Mutualité Hindoue', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 1 June 1930; VNA2 GD2998: Statuts 1931.

⁷⁵⁴ 'Pourquoi ne Fonderiez-vous pas une 'Union Sportive Hindoue'', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 18 October 1931.

progresses he knows how to adapt to everything'.⁷⁵⁵ Similarly, local renouncers who were seen to have fulfilled their potential in the colony were honoured through banquets and other events, usually hosted by their social organisations, with lengthy accounts written up in the Franco-Tamil press. A banquet held in July 1923 for the entrepreneur Xavier de Condappa and the *colon* Mouttou is one example; a later *champagne d'honneur* in honour of the Civil Service Administrator Mr. Samy is another.⁷⁵⁶

A further way in which the French of India sought to secure their future in the colony was to elevate their past. They did not have to look far back into history to find reason to claim a rightful position within the colonial project. But – better still – they eagerly seized upon new French historical and archaeological evidence from Indochina to find justification for their own presence reaching back much farther into the past.

From the 1920s French citizens of Indian origin in Cochinchina who were mutualists and publicists began increasingly to make reference to the pioneering colonial spirit established by their forebears. It was one of the central points made by Edouard Marquis at a *Solidarité* banquet held in 1923:

In this grandiose monument that France has build in this country, our ancestors have carried their stone...soldiers and functionaries of the hour, they have silently paid their tribute to French sovereignty. They died alongside our brothers from the Metropole. *This cannot be forgotten*. Following their example we bring our own modest contribution to the sublime work of France in this country. We have only one wish: to work for the greatness (*grandeur*) of France.⁷⁵⁷

The same argument was made in *Saigon-Dimanche* in a defense of Indians barred from entry into the French mutual for employees of commerce. The French of India, among the first colonisers, had earned their right to remain in Cochinchina:⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁵ 'Soiree musicale pour J. Samuel', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 11 October 1932; 'Championnat Interclub du Tonkin. Le T.C. est champion, mais Saumont est écrasé par Samuel', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 26 March 1933; 'Aviateur Hindou Avadaiyappachettiar arrivée à Saigon', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 24 December 1933.

⁷⁵⁶ 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 July 1923; 'On fête un partant', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 27 August 1923; See also 'Un grand philanthrope hindou M. Xavier de Condappa', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 February 1931; VNA2 GS2997: Annual Bulletin of the Mutuelle Hindoue 1935.

⁷⁵⁷ 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 July 1923.

⁷⁵⁸ 'Notre programme', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 3 July 1927.

The insalubrious beginnings of the colony took the lives of many valiant pioneers. Dysentery, which stocked the cemeteries, caused ravages greater than those brought by *Annamite* bullets. The French of India were called to hold subordinate positions that no European could fill. And their services were appreciated at their proper worth. Endemic illnesses did not spare them. Many of them fell on this soil that they helped to make French.⁷⁵⁹

The notion that Indian migrants had contributed to the conquest and French colonisation of Cochinchina was not new. It had been used in the past, notably by European defenders of the renouncer cause in Cochinchina, and by renouncers themselves in their campaign on behalf of Saigon's Indian policemen.⁷⁶⁰ The novelty in the 1920s was that the French of India were now asserting this claim not only to French colonial audience, but to a public which included educated Vietnamese. It is doubtful that the more radical Vietnamese of the late 1920s were in any way persuaded by Indian migrants eager to demonstrate their role as joint architects of French colonialism. But a 1922 article in the Constitutionalist *Tribune Indigène* suggests that, although renouncer claims to the right of conquest in Indochina might not have been completely accepted, such claims would not have been rejected out of hand by the more moderate Vietnamese thinkers of the time:

Do [the Vietnamese] not have the right to question foreigners [the Indians] who come to constitute a political and administrative oligarchy in their country without offering moral and intellectual guarantees that one would expect generally of those who aspire to occupy the first positions in a well-organised society? The French are here by their 'right of conquest'; but next to this right...they make a more respectable claim on the natives by bringing to them the fruits of a long civilisation built on several centuries of work and study. We bend before this superiority without relinquishing...hope that we will... through the study of our educators...rise to the level of Europeans.⁷⁶¹

The French of India's presentation of themselves in the 1920s as 'sons of the conquest' was not intended merely to stir their own pride or appeal solely to French patriotism. It was part of an ongoing discussion, in which both politically conservative *Français de*

⁷⁵⁹ Raoul Vernier, 'Ceux qu'on ne défend pas', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 7 August 1929.

⁷⁶⁰ H. Ternisien, 'La Question Electorale en Cochinchine', Supplement of *Journal d'Outre Mer*, 21 February 1888; ANOM FM Indo NF329 La situation des travailleurs Indous en Indochine 1919: Chamber of Deputies Parliamentary report 3rd session 27 March 1919; ANOM GGI17248: Pamphlet 'Ce qui se passé au Colonies', p. 4.

⁷⁶¹ 'La Question Indienne', *Tribune Indigène*, 6 December 1922.

l'Inde and moderate, non-communist Vietnamese participated and which both parties took seriously at the time, over the meaning of colonisation and the advancement of colonised peoples.

The *Tribune* in the above passage suggested that the Vietnamese could accept the French right to conquest because the French had also brought the 'fruits' of their (admirable, it was implied) civilisation. The Indians, by contrast, had come with no 'moral' or 'intellectual guarantees' and no such civilisation. As if in direct response to this challenge, Indian French citizens resident in Saigon seized upon the idea of 'Greater India' and, quite literally, its scholars as they passed through the city en route to Angkor and other points of archeological interest.

'Greater India', the notion of 'India as the source of a great Pan-Asian mission of overseas cultural diffusion in ancient times' was conceived in the 1920s by Indian social scientists drawn to the scholarship of early twentieth century French Indologists, Dutch and French epigraphists and archaeologists working in Southeast Asia, as well as early twentieth century anthropological and cultural theorists.⁷⁶² Pursuing the study of Southeast Asia's ancient civilisations (which their colonial presence in the region had given them license to undertake) the European scholars emphasised the influence of early, expansionist, Indian kingdoms on Southeast Asia's ancient civilisations and their splendid artistic and architectural legacies. The Indologist Coedès claimed that the Indian thinkers rediscovered in this new scholarship a long forgotten past:

A curious thing, India quickly forgot that its culture had spread to the east and the southeast over such vast areas. Indian scholars were unaware of this until very recently, and it took a small group of them, who had learned French and Dutch and undertaken studies...in the Universities of Paris and Leiden to discover, in our works and those of our colleagues in Holland and Java, the history of what they now call, with a legitimate pride, 'Greater India'.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶² Bayly, 'Imagining 'Greater India'', p. 708; G. Coedès, *Les Etats hindouisés de l'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, Paris: de Boccard, 1989 [1948], p. 4.

⁷⁶³ Coedès, *Les Etats hindouisés*, p. 4.

But beyond this sense of rediscovery, the appeal of the European findings for the Indian scholars and their supporters lay in the way in which studies of this ancient past could be shaped to resonate with the present. They posed a satisfying challenge to the idea, received mainly through British Imperialist thinkers, of India as a minor player in world history, a 'domain of timeless, ahistorical essences, and fixed territorial units successively conquered by the irresistible forces of 'Aryan', 'Muhammedan' and European civilisation'.⁷⁶⁴ The Indian scholars' Indian-centred interpretations of the works of 'Greater India' thinkers emphasised the 'centrality of their forbears in the engendering of high culture in other lands'.⁷⁶⁵ India was not timeless and unchanging, but dynamic and expansive. Its peoples were not defeated, but harboured a 'genius' for civilising others, having indeed been colonisers themselves. Their form of imperialism, moreover, had been 'peaceful and benevolent...a unique thing in the history of mankind'.⁷⁶⁶

It comes as little surprise that Indians residing in Indochina in the early twentieth century should have come into contact with ideas of 'Greater India' and found much there that appealed to them. With Saigon as their central node, Indochina's Indian communities were at the crossroads for access to Angkor in the Khmer heartland, the Cham monuments of central Vietnam, and the sites of Funan and Oc Eo in the Mekong Delta. The *Français de l'Inde*, by placing themselves within the ranks of those who had brought French civilisation to Cochinchina, had already begun to develop a view of themselves as a 'supra-local civilising force', albeit one wedded to French colonialism.⁷⁶⁷ Greater Indianists' challenge to Anglo-Saxon imperialist thinking sat comfortably with the conservative politics of most French citizens of Indian origin. They remained loyal to France as an imperial power but were relatively free in their criticism of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent. The 'peaceful' and 'benevolent' ancient Indian colonising force, as Bayly has observed, was expressed in terms which mirrored French colonialist views of their own 'respectful' civilising mission.⁷⁶⁸ This point would not

⁷⁶⁴ Bayly, 'Imagining 'Greater India'', pp.710-711.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 716, 720-721.

⁷⁶⁶ 'SVK' quoted in Bayly 'Imagining 'Greater India'', p. 712.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 706.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 714.

have been lost on Indochina's renounced Indians, who largely endorsed the *mission civilisatrice* despite their battles with Cochinchinese authorities to ensure its principles were respected.

It is not surprising either than the *Réveil Saigonnais*, with its links to French India, should have come across Sylvain Lévi, a French Indologist much-admired by Greater Indianists. In July of 1923 the *Réveil* published an article by Lévi in which he traced French contributions to Indology from the late nineteenth century. The French conquest of Indochina, he maintained, had opened up certain avenues in the study of Indian overseas expansion. The discovery by Aymonier (self-trained archaeologist and scholar of Champa) of a vast epigraphic literature (translated by the sanskritist Bergaigne in Paris in the late 1800s), proved that 'Indochina received its civilisation from India; the literature, the sacred language, the instructions, the arts of India flourished there from the first centuries of the Christian era'. 'Attention was swiftly drawn', Lévi continued, 'to the role of India in the civilisation of the Far East and its place in the ensemble of human civilisation'.⁷⁶⁹

The article served a dual purpose. On one level it merely enlightened readers about the development of French scholarship in Asia. It also invited Indian expatriate readers, however, to feel a sense of belonging with a far greater historical depth than one that began with the French conquest. Renouncers and other Frenchmen of Indian origin could go further and reconcile the two historical narratives. They could claim as their legacy the civilising energies of the ancient Indians, while asserting that the French colonialism to which they were loyal was an avenue through which this ancient force could be revitalised. If France, as Lévi emphasised in closing his article, could 'recall with a legitimate pride' the part played by French scholars in uncovering Southeast Asia's ancient ties to India, the *Français de l'Inde* in Indochina could claim both traditions and both forms of 'genius' as their own.

⁷⁶⁹ Sylvain Lévi, 'Indianisme', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 19 July 1923.

The opportunity to claim publicly the legacy of Greater India came for the French of India with the arrival of a somewhat unexpected visitor to Saigon. The anticipated arrival, in July of 1924, of Bengali poet and Nobel Prize Laureate Rabindranath Tagore prompted a call in the *Réveil Saigonnais* for Saigon's expatriate Indians to show respect for their esteemed compatriot, and to demonstrate to the rest of the colony the success that their people could achieve, by receiving him in a fitting manner during his stay.⁷⁷⁰ This plea for a proper reception for Tagore was perhaps the first time in which a call for *hindou* unity in the Franco-Tamil press was explicitly intended to include more than the narrow group of renounced Indians and the small coterie of Indo-French who joined them. 'This is the moment, more than ever', the article proclaimed, 'to forget all personal animosity, to make a clean slate of all prejudices of caste or religion and to unite ourselves and make for [Tagore] a sumptuous reception....Let's show him that we are proud of him. Let's give him the proof of our union and allow the poet to carry home an excellent impression of the Indian colony of Saigon'.⁷⁷¹ In practice too, preparations for Tagore's arrival were carried out by a committee representative of all of the Indian interests in the colony. A meeting held some weeks' later to prepare for Tagore's arrival at Saigon's 'Chettiar temple' was attended by twenty-one members of a provisional reception committee, including 'four Chettys, two Muslims, four Indian French subjects, four Bombay merchants, four Hindus and three Parsis', with a renounced Indian as its leader.⁷⁷² Nearly 5000 piastres was pledged towards the costs of a lavish reception. It was to include a pavilion to receive the poet at the port, and a cortège, including two decorated elephants, to take him in procession, ('preceded by music'), up Catinat Street, Saigon's main avenue, to the house where he was to stay. A visit was also foreseen to the ruins of Angkor.⁷⁷³

In the event, Tagore was unable to stop in Saigon, matters requiring his swift return to Calcutta. One member of his party did descend at Saigon though, carrying Tagore's message of apology to those awaiting his arrival. This person was the historian

⁷⁷⁰ Un Hindou, 'Un appel aux Hindous!', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 2 June 1924.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² ANOM GGI65474: Milieux indiennes.

⁷⁷³ 'Pour Recevoir Tagore', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 1 July 1924.

and 'Greater India' thinker Kalidas Nag, who had studied in Paris under Sylvain Lévi. Although there is no record of whether he was treated, in place of Tagore, to the planned elephant procession, there is ample proof that his visit injected further enthusiasm among the *Français de l'Inde* of Saigon for the idea of 'Greater India'.⁷⁷⁴

Among the 'Greater India' thinkers, Nag most consciously signaled in his overseas visits that contemporary Indian expatriates were the 'future agents of an Indian-led mission of pan-Asian cultural renewal', and his sojourn in Saigon is clear evidence of this.⁷⁷⁵ He actively sought contact with expatriate Indians during his stay. A notice placed in the *Réveil Saigonnais* announced that he would receive visitors at fixed times every morning and afternoon where he resided at the French quarter villa of (renouncer) Louis Anoussamy.⁷⁷⁶

Nag was interviewed by Edouard Marquis at the *Réveil* shortly after his arrival. In the interview he voiced the idea of ancient India's peaceful moral conquest:

This civilisation did not seek military conquest or economic invasion. It focused on the intellectual domain: it was a great and beautiful idea of fraternity and of peace which spread throughout the countries and peoples. The genius of India propagated itself beyond its frontiers and reunited in a cluster the peoples of the Far East.⁷⁷⁷

Nag swiftly projected this vision on to the present, and into the future, pointing to expatriate Indians as the agents with the potential to perpetuate this force. 'Everywhere we see the strong imprint of *Hindou* thought. And I reckon that the Indian colony is sufficiently large that its youth can orient itself towards this thought'. Self-improvement was the key:

It requires that the *Hindous* of Saigon shake off all apathy, and devote themselves to intellectual work. Certainly, not everyone is capable of it. But the new generation must be able to show to [other] peoples that it orients itself towards the

⁷⁷⁴ 'Un savant hindou à Saigon', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 17 July 1924.

⁷⁷⁵ Bayly, *Imagining 'Greater India'*, p. 729.

⁷⁷⁶ 'Un savant hindou à Saigon', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 17 July 1924; VNA2 GD1346: Anoussamy to GCCH, 22 May 1924.

⁷⁷⁷ Edouard Marquis, 'Le savant hindou Nag à Saigon', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 22 July 1924.

Light, towards Knowledge, towards Beauty. It will find there excellent nourishment for the intellect.⁷⁷⁸

Clearly noting Saigon's expatriate community were already caught up in a campaign of self-improvement, Nag remarked that their 'efforts lean in this direction'.⁷⁷⁹

One of the main purposes of Nag's visit, aside from tours to Angkor and some of the Cham sites to study the epigraphy, was to strengthen cooperation between French scientists and India. He was keen to assist the *Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, France's Hanoi-based centre of scholarly learning in the Far East, to bring sanskritists and scholars of pali to Indochina to assist with studies being carried out on sites there.⁷⁸⁰ His call for rapprochement was seized upon by Marquis and interpreted as a merger of the 'genius' of Greater India with 'French genius'. Marquis concluded from his interview with Nag that, 'if there are two thoughts called to complete each other, they are surely Latin thought and Hindu thought. The affinity which exists between them is remarkable'. 'The *Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*', he expounded, 'holds high a torch where scholars of the Far East must come and warm themselves. This is the flame of French Genius'. The high esteem in which Dr. Nag held French science (his years of study in Paris and his contact with French scholars appear to have deeply impressed him), allowed Marquis, in his article, to produce quotes from Nag expounding French virtues in support of his own thesis. 'The French archaeologists', Nag had asserted, 'are remarkable. It is France which has created archaeology'. Marquis reiterated Nag's call for 'intellectual rapprochement' between France (in Indochina) and India by reworking it into one which extolled French genius while not forgetting that Indochina owed its civilisation to India. The two narratives of benevolent imperialism were brought together and, it was implied, the Indians of Indochina (at least those loyal to France) had rightful claims over both: 'The role of France in the Far East has never been to enslave the people. Like India, France has sought a moral conquest. Now, she may be forcefully aided by *Hindou* thought in her ideals of Goodness and Justice'.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

The use of the notion of 'Greater India' to elevate their own presence in Indochina continued to appeal to the French of India, but there was less appetite for displaying this view in public by the late 1920s. A Vietnamese shift to more radical forms of politics, aided by the fact that Cochinchina's ethnic Vietnamese majority had never identified itself with the people and cultures properly indigenous to the south, meant that claims to this ancient heritage were short-lived as a means of convincing the Vietnamese of the Indians' rightful place in the colony.

When Rabindranath Tagore eventually did visit Saigon, in June of 1929, he delivered a lyrical speech in which he posed as a present-day bearer of the force of 'Greater India':

I look across the centuries and I see the vision of a life that has left its mark on this land, and which runs still through my veins. I come to you with the memory of an encounter, an encounter which awoke the soul of this country to direct it on a new path of achievement, with all of its richness in Arts and Ideas. This age is now mute...all that remains is its shell which stretches out in magnificent ruins. The heart of Indian beat, in times past under [this] sunny sky...it lived its dreams in Beauty and sowed its thought in view of a rich monsoon of Culture in this foreign land. I feel that this distant India has come in me to visit once again...I am a messenger of the past. I am standing at your door, and I seek a place in your heart. I ask you to recognise me, even today when this story has been erased and the lamp has been put out...know that my heart beats to the same rhythm, to the human joys as well as the sorrows, as those who came before me who lived in the past amongst you...I carry to you the greetings of this radiant India which promulgated its light on this soil, and the message of sympathy and fraternity from the India of the present.⁷⁸²

On this occasion, unlike Kalidas Nags' visit six years' earlier, neither of Saigon's Franco-Tamil newspapers took the opportunity to work Tagore's words into extended pieces on the glorious legacy which overseas Indians were to perpetuate under the French flag. Tagore's speech was delivered to a mixed audience which included the Vietnamese reformers Bùi Quang Chiêu and Dương Văn Giáo. His visit had been organised by a

⁷⁸² S.A., 'L'arrivée du poète Tagore, un des sommets de la pensée humaine', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 26 June 1929.

more formal 'Franco-Hindou Annamite' committee, with Chiêu as its president.⁷⁸³ Tagore's speech in this context risked being interpreted, in its exaltation of the 'lost' Indian contribution of the past, as an effort to diminish the level of culture and civilisation of modern Indochina. The *Saigon-Dimanche* printed the speech in full but was nonetheless quick to provide an interpretation favourable to harmony between the peoples of Indochina. In his coverage of the event Samy Abraham hastily commended the 'excellent soirée where all races forgot themselves and communed in the idea of Fraternity', and concluded, 'we would be failing in our duty if we did not express here our heartfelt gratitude to the French and *Annamites* who, putting aside all racial sentiments, received in such a dignified manner our poet Rabindranath Tagore'.⁷⁸⁴ The *Réveil Saigonnais* allowed itself to indulge to a certain extent in Greater India glory. It published the brief greetings delivered by Pondicherry lawyer Xavier at a reception held for Tagore at Saigon's main Chettiar temple. There Xavier thanked Tagore for reminding 'French Cochinchina, so hospitable to my compatriots', of its 'noble filiation, its Indian origin'. The *Réveil*, however, did not publish any of Tagore's speech.⁷⁸⁵

Unity and discord

In their drive to advance themselves in Cochinchina Indian French citizens were preoccupied with demonstrating their own unity. Most of the social organisations established in Saigon by the *Français de l'Inde* included an emphasis on 'unity', 'social union', or 'solidarity' among their goals. These same organisations used their numerous gatherings to elaborate on this theme. *Solidarité's* banquet of July 1923 included a lengthy treatise on unity.⁷⁸⁶ The theme of solidarity also ran through the event held for the Administrator Samy a month later.⁷⁸⁷ 'Social union' was the subject of not one but two talks hosted in the summer of 1929 by the *Mutualité Hindoue*, the first conducted by *Mutualité* member Mr. Bernadotte, and the second delivered by the society's dubious

⁷⁸³ 'Réception à Saigon de Rabindranath Tagore', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 17 June 1929.

⁷⁸⁴ S.A., 'L'arrivée du poète Tagore, un des sommets de la pensée humaine', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 26 June 1929.

⁷⁸⁵ 'Tagore est rentrée chez lui. Une réception à la pagode des chettys', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 23 June 1929.

⁷⁸⁶ 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 July 1923.

⁷⁸⁷ 'On fête un partant', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 27 August 1923.

patron, Mr Darles.⁷⁸⁸ Despite the latter man's deep unsuitability as a moral guide, both talks, according to the separate reports in the *Saigon-Dimanche*, were 'loudly applauded'.⁷⁸⁹

Although unity was an important part of the programme of the Frenchmen of India to better themselves, it was their weakness rather than their strength. They were aware that 'for us to gain esteem and to march in perfect accord with all the others, it is necessary first of all to be grouped and united ourselves'.⁷⁹⁰ Yet even as they entered the public arena to demonstrate to the rest of Cochinchina their potential for advancement, they were dogged by internal divisions. And one of the main sources of discord was something renouncers claimed to have set aside long ago, the persistence of caste-base prejudices.

The first overt reference to conflicts within the group of *Français de l'Inde* in Cochinchina comes with the *Solidarité* banquet held to honor de Condappa and Mouttou in July of 1923. Judging by the reticence of some of the men called upon to speak, the 'retrograde' problem of caste prejudice evidently caused discomfort. Two of the four speakers appeared loathe to name as caste prejudice the very problem which had led to the formation of their society. The president of the association, Bonjean, spoke of a clear conflict within the group, but referred to it as a problem of 'clans'. A 'grievous spectacle of coteries' had formed within the community and 'clans' had 'risen up and torn each other apart'. *Solidarité's* leaders, he claimed, had gone 'from door to door' in an effort to make peace and 'to call for a union in the spirit and of the heart'. The second speaker, Mouttou, shied away from any specific mention of conflict, saying only that 'in the first days of our arrival in the colony' (he had been there thirty years) each man had struggled for himself, and now was the time to come together for a common purpose.

⁷⁸⁸ 'The appointment of Mr. Darles as honorary patron of the *Mutualité Hindoue* in the late 1920s indicates that the French of India did not always keep good company when seeking the patronage of men in power. Arrived in Saigon to take up the presidency of the Saigon Chamber of Commerce, Darles had previously earned the title of 'the butcher of Thai Nguyen' while resident of that Tonkinese province for his many acts of 'capricious despotism', notably during the 1917 prison revolt. Darles' unsavoury character is described in detail in Zinoman, *Colonial Bastille*, pp. 191-196. Quotes here from, Zinoman, *Colonial Bastille*, p. 191, and Hue-Tam, *Radicalism*, p. 118, respectively.

⁷⁸⁹ 'Un Conference', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 28 July 1929; 'Une remarquable conference de M. Darles', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 1 September, 1929.

⁷⁹⁰ 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnaï*, 9 July 1923.

De Condappa in his speech at the same banquet was (characteristically) more bold, openly naming caste prejudice as the cause of the discord that continued to divide expatriate renouncers. He declared he would fight for the 'defence of the interests of the Indian Colony (*la colonie Indienne*)', but that he would only do so in return for a union which 'abandons all notions of caste' and which 'banish[es] from our society the social prejudices so strongly rooted in India, but which have no place here'.⁷⁹¹ De Condappa's stern reproach was not nearly as well-received, however, as the final speech, by Edouard Marquis. Marquis downplayed the persistent rivalries and flattered his audience instead with a more positive proposal, that the French of India were riding the crest of the most progressive wave of social reform in India. He won enthusiastic applause from the one hundred *Solidarité* members in attendance at the banquet for his description of political and social movements in India as a single-minded drive for unity of all Indians regardless of caste:

India, asleep under the British yoke, has begun to awaken...The same thought, the same pride, animates this people of the most diverse castes. Thus the barriers of prejudice, peoples' habits and customs, are falling away. Muslims, Hindus, Catholics, children of all castes are uniting...India is beginning to think. She is manifesting her willingness to act...something is changing over there. India is thinking (Applause). India is throwing off her lethargy and taken conscience of herself by a first act whose meaning is profound and which constitutes the finest revolution that the country can achieve: the abolition of caste and class (Repeated applause).⁷⁹²

Moving on swiftly from talk of internal discord, and depicting Saigon's French citizens of Indian origin as caught up in this exciting movement of change, Marquis urged the two honoured members to carry to India the message that in Cochinchina 'the children of India seek solidarity, they are trying to unite'.⁷⁹³

Social reform in India was a process both more difficult and more complex than Marquis suggested, and his call to unity, confined to expatriate Indians with French citizenship and French loyalties, was clearly not intended to bring together all expatriate

⁷⁹¹ All quotes from 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 July 1923.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

Indians regardless of caste or creed. His point however, was not to dwell on details but to rouse his audience with the stirring notion that their own drive for unity reached across to a larger movement in India whose meaning was more profound. Moreover, it was the very benevolence of French rule which the French of India had to thank for their social advancement. British rule in the subcontinent, Marquis argued, was marked by brutality ('agitations, inquisitions and arrest'; 'blood spilled and the tears of millions of families'). He did not go so far as to assert that the British presence had served to strengthen social prejudice, but it had induced 'lethargy' and had done nothing to alleviate it. By contrast, the French presence in Pondicherry and the other lesser Establishments was a positive force serving to address social inequality. '*Hindus* under French administration' as he described it in a later article, had undergone a 'happy evolution'.⁷⁹⁴ This resulted, unlike the unhappy lot of Indians under British rule, in 'French peace' in its possessions both in India and in Indochina. 'Here, well-being and joyous smiles circulate on you faces. In the shadow of this French flag which you love profoundly unfolds the most loyal and peaceful existence possible'.⁷⁹⁵ The enthusiastic applause which greeted Marquis' speech suggests that, caught up in the stirring notion of social revolution, the *Français de l'Inde* temporarily forgot their quarrels.

Marquis' aligning of Cochinchina's *Français de l'Inde* with a 'social revolution' in India may be thought to have instigated fears in French authorities in Cochinchina that they were similarly sympathetic to Indian nationalism. After all, French Security forces in Cochinchina kept a watchful eye on the numerous Indians who visited the colony in the 1920s, out of fear they might spread nationalist ideas.⁷⁹⁶ Marquis' attack on British policy in India in order to build up the legitimacy of the French approach in the subcontinent was widely accepted, however, and does not appear to have raised any suspicions as to his loyalty. If any disservice was done to the French of India by Marquis' approach, it was more probably that such extreme and pandering loyalty to France did little to

⁷⁹⁴ Edouard Marquis, 'Un mouvement social', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 20 November 1932.

⁷⁹⁵ 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 July 1923.

⁷⁹⁶ See ANOM GGI65474: Milieux Indiens; ANOM GGI65475: Service de la sûreté rapport annuel 1^{er} juillet 1926 à 1^{er} juillet 1927. Tome II Ch VII Les Indiens; ANOM GGI65476: Action Indienne.

convince thinking Vietnamese, however moderate their views, that they and the Indian Frenchmen held any shared interests.

Stirring as Marquis' word may have been, and perhaps because they really sought to sweep away rather than address the discord within the ranks of French citizens of Indian origin, accusations of caste based-prejudices did not go away. Rivalries erupted both within and between three mutual societies in the late 1920s and early 1930s. They were centred on accusations of caste-based exclusion but they did not remain solely about caste. The disputes also reflected the way in which Indian voters' political allegiances had become divided from 1929, with some continuing to remain loyal to their Deputy Outrey and others seeking more independent political paths. Some French of India were beginning to express the view that their attachment to India was stronger than their attachment to France. Divisions between them also surfaced in disagreements about what was being spent by the social organisations and to whose benefit. In general, there was a feeling among the less-educated, less securely employed of *Français de l'Inde* that they were suffering the effects of the Depression more keenly than their more privileged compatriots. In the view of the 'underprivileged', their more securely employed rivals continued to allow themselves the luxury of banquets, honours, high-minded speeches and other more frivolous aspects of 'profile raising', while they themselves were facing unemployment. Class divisions paralleled, albeit imperfectly, underlying caste origins which probably helped to keep caste discrimination at the forefront of people's concerns.⁷⁹⁷

Despite the two talks on 'social union' hosted by the *Mutualité Hindoue* in the summer and autumn of 1929, before the year was out the Governor of Cochinchina had received lengthy complaints from Indians claiming to have been barred from joining that association. The central accusation in the first letter, penned by Iroudyanadin Belconde, a secretary at the Chamber of Commerce, was that the members of the society were 'all

⁷⁹⁷ VNA2 GD2997 Mutuelle Hindoue de la Cochinchine: including subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue'; VNA2 GD 2998 Mutuelle des Français de l'Inde Employés de Commerce et d'Industrie 1934.

casted' and anyone who was not of caste (*non casté*, of *pariah* status) was prevented from joining.⁷⁹⁸

It was not so much the accusations of caste-based discrimination, however, as Belconde's further (albeit less credible) claim that the 'Tamby clan' offered financial support to 'the anti-French of French India' that prompted French authorities to take notice. In light of Belconde's accusation of the mutual society's political involvement, and a subsequent complaint that the *Mutualité Hindoue* was a front for an 'electoral group' in the hands of unnamed local politicians, a French Security agent was sent to monitor the groups' meetings. Signatories to the latter complaint (a petition backed by seventy Indian functionaries and employees of commerce) claimed to have all been sponsored the previous month by 'friends who were already members of the association'. They maintained their applications were rejected because the 'electoral agents' who controlled the *Mutualité* and '[know] that their involvement in local politics would not be tolerated by the majority of us' would be 'bothered by our presence'.⁷⁹⁹

The report issued by the French security agent failed to expose any political activity within the *Mutualité*, seditious or otherwise. The attention drawn to the society by the complaints, however, succeeded in forcing Mr. Tamby, the society's president, to accept as members those who he had previously turned away.⁸⁰⁰ In an announcement printed shortly thereafter in the pages of the *Saigon-Dimanche*, the *Mutualité Hindoue* outlined procedures for sponsorship in order 'to avoid unjustified criticisms', a gesture suggesting it might become more transparent in its practices.⁸⁰¹ Nevertheless in a speech he made on the occasion of its first anniversary, Tamby did not admit any preference on the basis of caste origin, but made no apologies for wanting to limit membership to 'a group of right thinking (*bien pensant*) men [rather than] than a disorganised crowd'.⁸⁰² French security now considered the problem solved, even though it appears to have only

⁷⁹⁸ VNA2 GD2997: subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue', Belconde to GCCH, 29 October 1929.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.: subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue', *Français de l'Inde* to GCCH, 31 October 1929.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid.: subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue', Sûreté to GCCH, 13 November 1929, and Note confidentiel pour le GCCH re Mutualité Hindoue, 4 November 1929.

⁸⁰¹ 'Mutualité Hindoue', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 1 June 1930.

⁸⁰² 'A la Mutualité Hindoue', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 September 1929.

created a society which, holding under its roof members of rival camps, fed for a time on antagonism. Such episodes were low points in attempts by the French of India to raise their public profile, but the *Mutualité Hindoue* nonetheless submitted to the Municipality the minutes of its Annual General meeting for 1930 replete with details of the criticisms and counter criticisms which took place, culminating in an atmosphere which 'suddenly became stormy [and] obliged the president to bring the meeting to a close'.⁸⁰³

In the midst of this atmosphere of discord, another Indian mutual association was created. *The Mutuelle des Indo-Français, Employés de Commerce et d'Industrie de la Cochinchine*, founded in 1931, was formed with the backing of the *Saigon-Dimanche* in response to the refusal of the French Mutual Association for Employees of Commerce to accept French citizens of Indian origin.⁸⁰⁴ Right from its inception however, it was drawn into the rivalries between Indian French citizens in Saigon, which then continued both internally within each of the mutual associations, and between them. The Cochinchinese government was alerted in a curious letter from 'a sincere group of French Indian employees of commerce', apparently all members of the *Mutualité Hindoue*, of a 'rumour' that a society was being founded to rival the existing association. The *Mutualité*, they maintained, already accepted Frenchmen of India who were employees of commerce and industry and it worked 'wonderfully'. This rendered the creation of a new society unnecessary. Besides, they claimed, disagreement was rife within the small group which had formed to create the new association and it would 'not work'.⁸⁰⁵

Although it was unclear how this group of 'sincere French Indians' expected the government to act - they merely demanded that 'justice be served' - they were not wrong in sensing discord within the ranks of the newly formed *Mutuelle Indo-Française*.⁸⁰⁶ It did not take long for differences among the new society's 150 members to come to the surface.⁸⁰⁷ In May 1934, Messrs. Antoine and Saint Jacques, initially nominated as the society's accountants, were withdrawn from their positions following disagreements over

⁸⁰³ VNA2 GD2997: subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue', Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 10 August 1930.

⁸⁰⁴ Raoul Vernier, 'Ceux qu'on ne défend pas', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 7 August 1927.

⁸⁰⁵ VNA2 GD2998: Sincere group of French Indian employees of commerce to Chief of 1st Bureau, 23 May 1931.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.: Note Police to GCCH, 11 August 1931.

its statues.⁸⁰⁸ In July, the founding president, Firmin David, who had already complained to the government of caste prejudices operating within the association, invited a police agent to attend the Annual General Meeting. At that meeting, David's opponents issued a 'summary of regrettable incidents' outlining 'mistakes' he had made by bringing 'caste affairs' within the society to the attention of the Governor General. When members Faïfe and Antoine demanded the agent's departure, Firmin David resigned, proclaiming as he did so the suspension of all activities of the society to await the government's arbitration.⁸⁰⁹ In a letter following this meeting to the Governor of the colony, David and his allies named several problems within the *Mutuelle Indo-Française*, from the exclusion of 'non caste *Hindous*', to the 'impossible attitude' of some members and their preoccupation with 'politics'.⁸¹⁰

By order of the president of Saigon's Civil Tribunal, an extraordinary general meeting of the *Mutuelle des Indo-Français employés de commerce et d'industrie* was held in September of 1934.⁸¹¹ As at the previous meeting, an outsider had been invited to observe on behalf of government. In the minutes of this meeting the observer was named as Mr. E. Marius, Security Inspector, himself a renounced Indian (though not a member of the *Mutuelle*). This provides another indication of just how far Indian French citizens were embedded in the Cochinchinese state. This extraordinary meeting witnessed a rash of resignations and re-resignations (of those who had already resigned but been persuaded back for the extraordinary meeting) but these satisfied Inspector Marius that the meeting had 'put an end to the dissensions that opposed the previous Committee and the majority of members'.⁸¹²

Despite the quarrels between and within these two mutual societies, members of the two organisations began from 1933 to envisage a merger, their purpose being to better come to the aid of *Français de l'Inde* affected by the economic crisis.⁸¹³ The negotiation

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.: Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 22 July 1934.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.: Assemblée Générale 22 July 1934.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.: David et al. to GCCH, 23 August 1934.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.: Procès verbale de l'assemblée générale 2 September 1934.

⁸¹² Ibid.: Police service to GCCH, 6 September 1934.

⁸¹³ Ibid.: 'Moral report', in Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 22 July 1934; VNA2 GD2997: Bulletin de la Mutuelle Hindoue, 'procès verbale', 17 November 1934, p. 24.

of the merger was again fraught with disagreements, but members of both societies could be commended for their persistence. All were agreed that the layoffs and reductions in salary which the crisis had obliged the administration, and even more so commerce and industry to undertake, had put the French of India, as much as any other group in Cochinchina, in a precarious position. They could not agree, however, on how to address the problem. One group, speaking on behalf of the *Mutuelle Indo-française*, maintained that wage-earners in the private sector were hardest hit. Hard economic times now brought class differences to the surface. In a 'moral report' explaining its position, the *Mutuelle Indo-française* claimed that the new merged association, besides refraining from participating in politics, should be created uniquely to protect the '*Hindou* proletariat'. 'The possessing class (landowners and those assimilated to them) and the favoured class (the functionaries) must give to the unfortunate class (the employees of commerce and the unemployed) without asking for anything in return'. Anything less was 'exploitation':

Thus a functionary who has his existence guaranteed, who has free medical care, reduced tariffs in hospital, paid holidays every three years, and a pension at the end of his career, has the right to dispute the few meagre benefits conceded to an unfortunate employee of commerce who has nothing but his miserable salary for him and his family to live on.⁸¹⁴

The notion that financial assistance from mutual funds should go solely to this 'unfortunate class' caused a 'storm of protest' from the leaders of the *Mutualité Hindoue*, who claimed that all who contributed their monthly fee, regardless of their position, had the right to obtain benefits from the society.⁸¹⁵

The merger of these two unhappy associations did take place, in November of 1934, although claims of caste exclusion, of functionary domination (this appears to have referred to the tendency for the better-educated, and more financially secure, to take over operations), and petty clashes of personality continued to be aired even as the meeting at

⁸¹⁴ VNA2 GD2998: 'Moral report', in Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 22 July 1934.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

which the merger was voted and agreed took place.⁸¹⁶ Discontent continued following the merger, with complaints that a 'spirit of caste' as well as a current of nationalism infected the new organisation. The latter accusation stemmed from the fact that the man chosen to be the head of the merged association was a French subject and not a French citizen, and one who, moreover, had had the 'audacity' to declare himself in the general meeting a *hindoue* first and foremost.⁸¹⁷ Some members continued to suggest that people were not being admitted to the society because of their caste background and objected to mutual society funds being lavished on some members (an expensive funeral wreath for one, the high cost of a banquet for others) while the costs of medical bills to others had not been properly reimbursed.⁸¹⁸

French authorities in Cochinchina evidently remained concerned at discontent within the new association as they continued to send agents to report on the society's meetings. Following the General Assembly in December 1935, French security reported that 'no question of politics' had been raised at the meeting.⁸¹⁹ In a handwritten note in this file an unidentified French official (his signature is illegible) claimed 'this fusion should have never taken place, it is the union of the carp and the hare (*pariahs* and the casted)'. See what we can do about it'.⁸²⁰

Ultimately, though, French authorities did little about these social divisions within this group of some of their most loyal supporters. And although some of the high-caste, better-educated renouncers made genuine attempts to seek reconciliation, many of these attempts were so high-minded as to be ineffectual. One example is provided in a speech given by Mr. J. Antoine, an active committee member on all three of the Indian associations founded from the late 1920s and otherwise lauded as a member who fought tirelessly to quell discord within the group of *Français de l'Inde*. In a speech delivered to the *Mutuelle Hindoue* in December of 1935 he quoted Montesquieu, Aristotle, Theocrates, and Napoleon Bonaparte among others, to demonstrate how all of these great

⁸¹⁶ VNA2 GD2997: Bulletin de la Mutuelle Hindoue, 'procès verbal', 17 November 1934.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid.: Messers. Faife and Belconde to GCCH, 8 February 1935.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.: procès verbal de 12 Avril, 1935; Ibid.: Director of security to GCCH, 23 December 1935.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

⁸²⁰ Ibid.: handwritten note, sender and receiver both illegible, circa November 1935.

men were in favour of man's solidarity with man. He looked to 'the mysterious Indies' [sic], and in particular to one of the base reliefs at Angkor depicting a scene between Krishna and Shiva, to provide an example of how 'the divinities preached solidarity long before Victor Hugo'. 'All our compatriots, sons of the same soil which is the hearth of humanity and the cradle of civilisation', he declared, 'must show themselves to be worthy of their ancestors. No more personal quarrels, no more uncontrolled passions, no more sectarian spirit'. Despite this reiteration of unifying Greater India themes, his exaggerated display of French cultural erudition and his exoticising of the subcontinent, (as if addressing an audience to whom it was unknown), can only have alienated many of those with whom he sought rapprochement.⁸²¹

All of the divisions that appeared within the group of Indian French citizens in Cochinchina with the onset of the Depression signaled that renunciation no longer carried the force it once did to bind them together. The idea that renounced Indians had put aside caste distinctions in accepting French citizenship had proven to be tenuous at best. They no longer rallied around the single political figure of the Cochinchinese deputy, and some among them had even begun to question whether their loyalty to France was steadfast. The growing sense of belonging to a wider overseas Indian community, initially, as we shall see, a necessary response to the political situation in Vietnamese Indochina, further began to loosen the bonds that held together the renounced Indians in Cochinchina.

In the interest of all *hindous*

One element in the renounced Indians' changing definitions of themselves which emerged most strongly from the late 1920s was their sense that, whether they themselves felt that way or not, they were viewed by the Vietnamese public as belonging to a wider group of overseas Indians.

From the early days of French colonisation the renounced Indians and other Tamil expatriates interacted on many levels in daily life, especially in the urban contexts of Saigon and Cholon. There were also occasions in the 1920s in which Indian French

⁸²¹ Ibid.: Annual Bulletin of the Mutuelle Hindoue of the Mutuelle Hindoue 1935.

citizens came together socially with the wider Indian community to welcome certain highly esteemed Indian visitors whom all groups were happy to claim as their own. Yet despite this openness on one level, and despite the calls by Indian social organisations for 'solidarity' and social change, renounced Indians and the small group of Indo-French who joined them remained closed within their own mutualist circles throughout much of the 1920s and, (though locked in internal dispute), into the 1930s. The *Français de l'Inde* paid little attention to signs that their overseas Indian compatriots were developing an interest in social and political reforms in India. The *Réveil Saigonnais* largely ignored the presence of several Indian social and political reformers who visited Saigon in the 1920s, although these visitors met with other members of the Indian expatriate community amongst whom they held conferences or raised money for social causes.⁸²² Nor did calls by the *Français de l'Inde* for unity in this period ever fully include expatriate Indians outside of their own narrow grouping.

It was only when more aggressive forms of Vietnamese anti-colonialism and the impact of the Great Depression produced more forthright Vietnamese objections to their presence in the colony that the French of India began to identify with overseas Indians outside the bounds of their own small group. They were marked by the incidents of violence (quickly contained but nonetheless ugly) which took place between Indian cloth merchants and Vietnamese in the lead-up to the economic crisis. And they were not unmoved by the attacks on the Chettiar moneylenders who were blamed for aggravating the crisis when it hit. Although those under attack were mainly British Indians who could be held to be different from their French counterparts, the attacks against them were strongly racial in nature. This contributed to a sense that regardless of their internal differences, reactions to Chettiar or Muslim actions in Cochinchina reflected on how the *Français de l'Inde* were viewed in the colony. From this period they took it upon themselves, albeit somewhat paternalistically at times, to sometimes monitor the behaviour, and at other times come to the defence of other Indian immigrants.

⁸²² See ANOM GGI65474: Milieux Indiens; ANOM GGI65475: Service de la sûreté rapport annuel 1^{er} juillet 1926 à 1^{er} juillet 1927. Tome II Ch VII Les Indiens; ANOM GGI65476: Action Indienne.

That the French of India were now concerned that their own reputation in the colony was dependent on how Indian compatriots outside of their own circles were viewed is evident in the *Réveil Saigonnais*' reaction to the 'Vienot street Affair' of 1928. The *Réveil* deplored the Vietnamese mobs who attacked the Indian shop, but reserved most of its indignation for the Indian employee's 'act of brutality' when he caused serious injury to the Vietnamese thief. The merchants, described emphatically as 'British subjects' and 'Muslims', were patently positioned outside the circles of the *Français de l'Inde* and were condemned in terms which reiterated French and Vietnamese criticisms of Asian foreigners' presence in the colony:

The cloth merchants, all British subjects, must not forget that they have come here to do business with the Vietnamese population...The *Annamite* does not tolerate violence from the rare Frenchman. For even greater reason is he entitled not to accept it from Muslims who come here to enrich themselves at the expense in Cochinchina.⁸²³

The actions of (British) Muslim merchants reflected badly on Indians from the French possessions in the colony precisely because their work, (and thus their identities in Vietnamese eyes), overlapped in areas such as tax farming.

The Indian French citizens and subjects who have come up against the Muslims as competitors for various public contracts do not want to have to put up with reprisals or even the distrust and resentment of the natives towards them because of...British subjects.⁸²⁴

The *Réveil* now extended its programme of self-improvement beyond its own small group of French citizens of Indian origin, sounding a warning to both Vietnamese and [Muslim] Indians that it was their duty as 'Asian races' to strive to better themselves. If the Vietnamese continued to engaged in mob behaviour, they risked 'remaining in comparison to the European races in a state of undeniable inferiority'. While Europeans had their disagreements, they resolved them not on the street but 'through the legal system'. The article noted a 'susceptibility' in Asians 'that the European races do not have':

⁸²³ 'Des Annamites agressent un marchand musulman', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 29 June 1928.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

The Asians proceed differently. In India, Muslims and Hindus have killed each other for futilities; recently in Tonkin Chinese and *Annamites* have fought openly over a quarrel between two individuals. And here *Annamites* and Muslims fight for a bobbin of thread.⁸²⁵

Asians must improve themselves because 'there must not be an antagonism between races'. Cultural influence was expressed now in terms other than the one-sided 'genius' brought from one place to another. Racial discord 'cannot exist between Asians who have affinities of religion, of civilisation, such as the Chinese, *Annamites*, *Hindou*, Malay, etc.'.⁸²⁶

When the *Saigon-Dimanche* launched a 'Clothing Crusade' in 1933, its purpose was similar to that of the *Réveil Saigonais* in its coverage of the Viénot Street affair. The aim was to secure better treatment for all Indians in the colony, in this case by encouraging expatriate Indian residents who continued to wear their indigenous garments to change to (modern) Western dress. The approach differed considerably, however, from that taken by the *Réveil* some years earlier. The *Réveil* had been careful to maintain a distance between its readership and the cloth merchants, whom it referred to as "British subjects" and 'Muslims' but never as fellow *Hindous* or Indians. The *Saigon-Dimanche* adopted a more amicable approach to the Muslims and Chettiars, both groups who continued in Cochinchina to retain many aspects of Indian dress and towards whom the campaign was directed.

In articles published to launch the campaign, Raoul Vernier lamented the fact that 'too many expatriate compatriots' continued to wear 'incommodious' national garb. The appearance of 'backwardness' conveyed by 'floating cloths and chignons', he argued, did not help to foster respect for Indians overseas. He observed a worldwide trend in which, 'more and more, people are tending to unify their clothing following the ethic of Western civilisation'. The early adoption by the Japanese of 'Western clothes and manners' had been a key to their success in the modern world. Pointing out that Chettiars and Muslims

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

in Hanoi, 'and even in Annam we have heard', all donned Western dress 'with the exception of a fez or cap', the *Saigon-Dimanche* expressed the hope that their brothers in Cochinchina would soon do likewise.⁸²⁷

While the *Réveil* warned Muslim merchants that their behaviour reflected more widely on the Indian expatriate community, here the *Saigon-Dimanche* attempted to put forward friendly advice to its compatriots on how they could make themselves 'better considered...by the Europeans as much as by the natives'. Referring to the animosity that had grown between the communities in this period, relations would 'become more cordial and less humiliating for some people, as has happened to them so many times in Saigon'. While it might not be necessary to adopt Western dress at home, living in a distant land they must do everything so that 'their dignified demeanour, their honourable way of life, earn them the esteem of the inhabitants'.⁸²⁸ The adoption of Western dress would consequently not only protect their interest but also 'the general interest of all Hindous'.⁸²⁹

Although the 1930s saw a more general shift towards Western dress on the part of overseas Indians in Southeast Asia, the 'Clothing Crusade' of 1933 might be credited at least with some small role in bringing about this change.⁸³⁰ Just over a month after its launch, and following assurances that its advice was intended in a friendly vein, the *Saigon-Dimanche* claimed triumphantly that its call had been heard: 'We hear from a good source that the Chettians have decided to adopt European dress'.⁸³¹

Efforts on the part of the French of India to maintain the prestige of a wider 'Indian colony' in Cochinchina are evident too, in an extended campaign in the *Saigon-Dimanche* in the 1930s in support of the Chettiar moneylenders. It is of note that in the preceding decade the *Réveil Saigonnais* had rarely made reference to the Chettiar

⁸²⁷ Raoul Vernier, 'Une croisade vestimentaire', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 3 September, 1933; R.V., 'A propos de la réforme vestimentaire des hindous. Une mise au point nécessaire', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 24 September 1933.

⁸²⁸ Ibid..

⁸²⁹ Raoul Vernier, 'Une croisade vestimentaire', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 3 September 1933.

⁸³⁰ See for example Muthiah et al., *Chettiar Heritage*, p. 268.

⁸³¹ R.V., 'A propos de la réforme vestimentaire des hindous. Une mise au point nécessaire', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 24 September 1933; 'Une campagne qui porte ses fruits', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 15 October 1933.

presence in Cochinchina, save to reiterate common French and Vietnamese views about Chettiar 'usurers' as a 'terrible social evil', or to post notices announcing the annual *Thaïpusam* chariot procession held at the main Chettiar temple.⁸³²

As soon as the Chettiar moneylenders began to be blamed for aggravating the economic crisis, however, *Saigon-Dimanche* took the unpopular step of coming to their defence. It was the only Saigon newspaper to do so, and while fighting off claims that he was in the pay of the 'black barons', its editor Raoul Vernier kept up this defence through the 1930s.⁸³³

Vernier's purpose was to debunk the many myths which he saw as being ever more elaborately built up around the Chettiars as the crisis deepened. To the accusation the Chettiars were 'Black Shylocks' who charged high rates of interest, Vernier replied that they lent on the basis of moral rather than material guarantees (something the European banks would never do) and this was why their loans were valued by so many people in need. To charges the Chettiars drained Indochina of its capital, he pointed to the eighty million piastres they had invested in the country and the five hundred thousand piastres they paid annually in trading licenses in Cochinchina. Against claims they were 'pitiless' in their haste to foreclose on loans (and that their underlying aim was thus to obtain land cheaply), Vernier reminded his readers that previous to the crisis, the Chettiars had held a reputation for being particularly accommodating with extending terms of repayment. Their interest, he maintained, lay not in pursuing their debtors at the first opportunity, but in prolonging loans, the better to collect interest. Moreover, the Chettiars were not alone in seizing assets. As many land seizures had been undertaken by credit unions and building societies under the control of the Bank of Indochina, yet the Chettiars alone had borne the brunt of public anger and State sanction. 'Deport the Directors of the Bank of Indochina', Vernier clamoured, once Chettiars began to be deported in late 1932. And why, he asked in early 1933 when the remaining Chettiar

⁸³² 'Les prêts d'honneur', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 23 April 1923; For example, 'Fête des chettys', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 18 January 1929.

⁸³³ Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! Ceux qu'on accuse de tous les maux', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 31 May 1931; Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! Pourquoi certains quotidiens attaquent les banquiers hindous', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 13 September 1931.

bankers were asked to discount their outstanding credits by fifty to sixty percent, had the Bank of Indochina not asked to do the same?⁸³⁴

Vernier's defence of the Chettiars was based on a rare but solid understanding of their economic role in Cochinchina. This was reinforced by arguments aimed at establishing the longstanding and rightful place of Chettiars in the colony. Like their renouncer compatriots, the Chettiars had 'come to Indochina...in the heroic time of its settlement'.⁸³⁵ They were already extending credit to expand rice cultivation in the Mekong Delta before Metropolitan capitalists had yet gained sufficient confidence to invest.⁸³⁶ When Bùi Quang Chiêu made a speech in which he accused the Indian moneylenders of exporting massive amounts of capital to India, Vernier replied: 'But Mr. Bùi Quang Chiêu, you know quite well that it was thanks to these Chettys in large part that rice paddies could be cultivated'.⁸³⁷

Vernier's defense of the Chettiar moneylenders exposed the anxieties created for all Indians in the colony by the treatment of the Chettiars during the Depression. 'I am compelled to say', he wrote, 'that I defend the Chettiars because they are *Hindous* and, because of this, my compatriots. And also because if the *Impartial* and the *Opinion* have attacked them, *it is precisely because they are Hindous*' [his italics].⁸³⁸ The low esteem in which the Vietnamese held the Chettiars, it was feared, extended to bad feelings for overseas Indians in general.

⁸³⁴ See Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! Ceux qu'on accuse de tous les maux', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 31 May 1931; Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! On expulse les Chettys pour permettre à la Banque d'Indochine et à ses filiales de créer en ce pays un monopole de crédit', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 26 March 1933; Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! Pourquoi certains quotidiens attaquent les banquiers hindous', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 13 September 1931; Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! Lesquels on tout de même investis 80 millions de piastres en ce pays', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 27 September 1931; Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! Les banquiers hindous n'ont pas intérêt à accarper les terres des Annamites', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 7 July 1931; 'La paille et la poutre: Réponse à l'Opinion', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 19 March 1933; Raoul Vernier, 'A propos de l'expulsion inique d'un banquier hindou: M. Soccalingamchettiar', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 9 October 1921; Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les Chettys! On veut obliger les Chettys à rabattre 50 à 60% de leurs créances', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 5 March 1933.

⁸³⁵ 'La paille et la poutre: Réponse à l'Opinion', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 19 March 1933.

⁸³⁶ Raoul Vernier, 'Haro! Comment les chettys loin d'être une plaie sont au contraire d'une grande aide pour le gouvernement', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 27 December 1931; Raoul Vernier, 'Haro sur les chettys. Pourquoi certains quotidiens attaquent les banquiers hindous', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 13 September 1931.

⁸³⁷ Raoul Vernier, 'Haro. Une réponse à M. Bùi Quang Chiêu', *Saigon-Dimanche*, 25 October 1931.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

While the first half of the 1930s saw the French of India locked in internal disputes over how their mutual associations in Cochinchina were to be organised, by the end of the 1930s most of the other 'caste and creeds' among the overseas Indians of Cochinchina had formed similar associations of their own for the purpose of defending their increasingly beleaguered interests in the colony. These associations looked to those formed by the *Français de l'Inde* as their models, but they were also influenced by Indian visitors to Cochinchina urging them to unite and organise to protect their interests.

In 1931, at the height of public outcry against them, the Chettiars created the Cochinchinese Association of Nattukottai Chettiars (later Indochinese). This association, through annual reports and other missives, transmitted to government the wishes and concerns of the bankers and aimed to draw greater public attention to their acts of philanthropy in the colony.⁸³⁹ An association for those of Hindu faith, the *Hindoue Tamoule Djana Sangam*, followed in 1936. The wealthy businessman Kathéappathévar, who by the 1920s had begun to contribute to charitable causes in the colony, was its president. For members who were renouncers, such as the former editor of *Saigon-Dimanche*, Raoul Radja-Ram Vernier, the creation of this society marked an identity shift, with religious belonging acknowledged in a way it had not been before. Several of the members listed were employees of Chettiar banks, but the Chettiars themselves, albeit Hindu, appear to have preferred to remain within their own association.⁸⁴⁰ Finally, Tamil Muslims attempted to form a similar modern organisation which could defend their interests in the colony and bolster their image in the eyes of the local population (although it is unclear whether such an organisation actually saw the light of day). In late 1936 the *Indochine-Inde* printed a letter from 'a Muslim subscriber' who asked why 'the leaders of the Tamil Muslim colony of Cochinchina do not take the initiative to create a fellowship society for Muslim compatriots'. The 'Catholics, Hindus and Chettiars' already had associations they could join, he pointed out, and the Muslims were the only the 'elements' of the overseas Indian community who did not have a society of their own.⁸⁴¹ By the 'Catholics' we may understand that he meant the *Français de l'Inde* and

⁸³⁹ VNA2 GD2994 Demande de capacité juridique présenter par l'Association Indochinoise des Nattukottai Chettiars 1940: Annual reports, 1938-1940.

⁸⁴⁰ 'Hindoue Tamoule Djana Sangam, Amicale Hindoue', *Indochine-Inde*, 8 March 1936.

⁸⁴¹ 'Pour un amicale des Musulmans tamouls', *Indochine-Inde*, 20 September 1936.

that by describing them in this way he was revealing how one element of their identity – their secular citizenship – was receding and other aspects of what defined them were coming to the fore.

When Pragasam, lawyer and ex-member of the Legislative Assembly of British India, came to Saigon in 1929 he proposed an All-India association for Indochina, urging expatriate Indians that a union between them without distinction of caste or religion was necessary if they were to earn the respect of the *Annamites* and the French. Although neither Chettiars nor other expatriate Indians answered his call in the full spirit in which it was intended, one French observer claimed this visit influenced the Chettiar decision to form an association. Of influence too, this observer claimed, was the message brought by the prominent banker Annamalaichetty who, visiting Saigon in the same year, spoke to local Chettiars of the need for solidarity between them and proposed they form an association through which to more easily present their causes to government.⁸⁴² Like the Chettiars, it was an incomer to the South Indian Muslim expatriate community, ‘our venerable Maulena’, who they claimed had planted the idea.⁸⁴³

The rapprochement of French citizens of Indian origin with other Indian expatriates from the late 1930s consisted in turns of defending and monitoring the behavior of overseas Indians other than themselves out of a recognition that their fate was tied to that of the Chettiar bankers, the South Indian Muslim merchants and other migrant groups. While the French of India extended their concerns to ‘raise the *Hindou* profile’ beyond their own limited horizons and their other Indian compatriots began to recognise the need to actively defend their own interests in the colony, none of these groups in the 1930s was as yet prepared to join in a single united effort to do so. For renounced Indians, the end result of their efforts to find strength in closer ties with other groups within the Indian expatriate community was that a new emphasis on other forms of allegiance drew them away from their common goal of striving to secure their place as

⁸⁴² VNA2 GD2994: note Commissaire ports of Saigon-Cholon to Head of Security, 11 October, 1930.

⁸⁴³ It is likely he was referring to Mavoulana Check-Fariksaid, described in Sûreté files as an ‘Arab’ who resided and preached at the main Saigon mosque from 1925 to 1926. ANOM GGI65475: Service de la Sûreté rapport annuel 1^{er} juillet 1926 à 1^{er} juillet 1927. Tome II Ch, VII Les Indiens.

colonial citizens. It ultimately contributed to weakening the renouncers and the wider circle of *Français de l'Inde* as a group of social and political consequence in the colony.

Conclusion

With the end of the First World War, Vietnamese political moderates became critical of privileges enjoyed by renounced Indians in Cochinchina, as they themselves began to demand political representation and a better position for themselves within the French system. In response to these criticisms, I have argued here, Indian French citizens, and the wider group of *Français de l'Inde* which included the Indo-French in the colony, developed visions of themselves as noble contributors to colonialism in Cochinchina. They put forward notions of themselves as respectable modern men, full of potential for advancement whose ancestors had played a just role in Cochinchina reaching far back into its past. Even as they did so, however, these Frenchmen of India began to be involved in internal disputes in which rival groups questioned how and for whom 'advancement' was to proceed.

By the late 1920s increasingly radicalised Vietnamese anti-colonialists superseded the moderate Constitutionals and Indians with French citizenship, as well as Indian expatriates generally, faced more racially-charged criticisms of their presence and purpose in the colony. These criticisms were intensified as the Depression of the 1930s made itself felt in Cochinchina. In response, the French of India used the position they had established for themselves within Saigon's public sphere to monitor and defend the behavior of the colony's wider community of overseas Indians. The lead they took in finding ways to use the new public arena that developed in Saigon from the 1920s to defend their own interests in the colony was actively followed too, by other overseas Indian groups. By the 1930s the *Français de l'Inde* were joined in their efforts to establish modern social organisations to represent their interests in the colony by Chettiars, Hindus and Tamil Muslims resident in the colony, all striving to do the same. These various Indian migrant groups taken together achieved some form of solidarity but remained enclosed nonetheless in separate parallel efforts, each to defend his own

position in the colony. For the renounced Indians, however, the bonds that had tied them together during half a century's sojourn in Cochinchina were irrevocably loosened by these two decades they devoted to remaking their public image in Cochinchina and redrawing the social and political boundaries both internally and between themselves and other Indians.

Conclusion

I made two overarching claims at the outset of this study. The first was that Indochina played a more significant role than has been acknowledged in the story of French colonialism in India. In support of this claim, I have examined how Indians from the French possessions made use of their ability to legally 'renounce' their personal status in favour of French citizenship (and the other possible futures this process implied) in order to advance their position in a colony other than their own. I have shown how those Indians for whom the idea of 'renouncing' had the greatest appeal were many of the same people who took up the service positions which became available in Cochinchina, and towns and cities elsewhere, as the Indochinese peninsula came under French domination. The types of people who chose to renounce were socially polarised. At one end were high caste, Francophile progressives and at the other end, *pariahs* seeking further means to shed the stigma of untouchability, even though they may have already undergone conversion to catholicism or gained a rudimentary French education in efforts to advance themselves. Although renouncers as a whole were the people of French India most loyal to the French cause, their opportunities at home in French India were limited. The geographic confines of the French *comptoirs* narrowed the scope for work within the colonial bureaucracy, while the possibility that renunciation might be truly equal to French citizenship was held in check by the very exercise of democracy in French India, in the form of the three decade-long hold on power of the renouncers' political rival, Chanemougan (1880-1908).

By contrast, Cochinchina was a land of great promise. The rights of Indians from the French possessions to vote and to enjoy the same contractual privileges as their European colleagues while employed as public servants were initially freely granted. Although it was not long before Indian privileges on Cochinchinese soil were challenged, renounced Indians managed, with a measure of success they did not achieve at home in India, to have their status recognised as that of full citizenship, and to enjoy the electoral rights and (with some exceptions) contractual privileges due to them as French citizens. Their position outside of their home country gave them added leverage. It allowed them

to cleverly up-end European ideas about the risks posed by expatriation to physical and moral well-being. And it facilitated their strategy of appealing to high officials in the Metropole, among whom stronger Republican sympathies could be found. Thus while renunciation in the history of the French Establishments in India has been taken to be a minor movement of negligible significance, it had a vital existence extraterritorially in Cochinchina. Renunciation was nurtured there by Indians who used it to fuel their ambitions and it permitted them to have a remarkable degree of power over how colonialism was to rule them.

It is no minor detail, however, that in some respects renounced Indians were not able to fully enjoy their citizenship rights in colonial Cochinchina. This leads to my second claim, that Indians, and especially renounced Indians from the French possessions, had a significant role (whose acknowledgement is long overdue) in the colonial history of the Indochinese peninsula. The Indian expatriates had a meaningful influence upon how the peoples of Indochina, more particularly those in Vietnamese Indochina and especially the peoples of Cochinchina, experienced colonialism and how they shaped their calls for reform.

The realities of colonial rule interceded to prevent expatriate renouncers from achieving, across the board, their ideal of living as full colonial citizens. Well-educated Indians in the middle and upper ranks of the Cochinchinese administration threatened to cut into the portion of Cochinchina's budget reserved for the salaries and additional benefits of European staff, and these same Indian employees offended the racial sensibilities of some European officials. This elite among renounced Indians generally succeeded, however, in persuading high officials in the Metropole to uphold their rights. But the threat of political instability which loomed with the prospect of Indians employed in the lower ranks being favoured far beyond the terms granted to their Vietnamese colleagues, meant that their citizenship could never be properly recognised as such. Debates about the rights and privileges of Indians employed within the Cochinchinese administration demonstrate the complex web of motives, beyond a desire to draw a racial

line between white Frenchmen and colonised peoples, used to negotiate and renegotiate the boundaries of rule.

French fears were not completely unfounded. Where Vietnamese reactions to overseas Indians have been documented, they show that Vietnamese resented the power expatriate Indians were able to wield over them. Renounced Indians were part of a wider overseas Tamil community which played many roles in colonial society. Interactions with these foreigners comprised one of the fundamental shifts, with the advent of French rule, in the lives of the people of Indochina. The Vietnamese of Cochinchina encountered Indians as wealthy merchants, petty traders, exacting tax farmers and, in the roles played by renouncers, as the face of French colonial authority in the bureaucracy and policing of the colonial state. Vietnamese resented the economic dominance of the merchants and the unchecked powers of the tax farmers, but they also made specific complaints about the privileged social and political position of renounced Indians. The reactions of Vietnamese who came into daily contact with overseas Indians carry a strong racial undercurrent. French placement of Indians in positions of power over the Vietnamese, particularly the positioning of Indian French citizens as an auxiliary 'civilising force', offended Vietnamese perceptions of their own racial superiority over the Indians. Vietnamese non-communist reformists in the south tended to convey their objections to Indian privilege in their colony in a more reasoned and less overtly racial vein than most. Nevertheless, the privileges and power enjoyed by overseas Indians on Vietnamese terrain were an important part of the colonial 'problem' as Vietnamese reformers conceived of it. For the moderate reform-minded Constitutionlists who sought the same kind of political and civil liberties as renouncers (and even their gradually more radicalised cousin Nguyễn An Ninh), the fact that renouncers enjoyed these privileges as expatriates on Cochinchinese territory was the clearest evidence of the need for reform.

From the 1920s and through the interwar years, Indochina's expatriate renouncers became unfocussed. This was despite the fact that in these years renouncers became more closely allied with the Indo-French, the small group of French citizens with mixed ancestry also originating from French India. Renounced Indians, alongside their Indo-

French compatriots, participated more purposefully than ever in mutualist activities, and two French language newspapers grew with their very active support into organs to defend the interests of the *Français de l'Inde*, the French of India. In the period from the 1880s through the 1910s the purpose which united renouncers (despite the social gulf which should have separated those of high caste from those of 'impure' origin) was a drive to secure equality with the French and become true French citizens. From the 1920s, evidence piled up to make them lose their conviction that they would continue in the future to hold their position in Indochina as the vanguard of new colonial citizens, that this was a prized position whose value was without question, or that they even had a future in Indochina. Citizenship as the greatest good that could be achieved within a colonial system was no longer the point. Vietnamese calls for reform and related French attempts to 'collaborate' had changed the terms upon which renouncers remained in Cochinchina. Renouncers and their fellow *Français de l'Inde* began to align more and more with the wider overseas Indian community. They were by no means Indian nationalists, but messages about social reform received from India raised questions which led renouncers down paths taking them further away from their ideal of citizenship. Ironically it was the influence of Indian ideas of social reform, (although pressures exerted by difficult Depression-era conditions also form part of the explanation), which brought questions of caste prejudice to the surface among renouncers for the first time in four decades. What is clear for renouncers is that by World War Two it was not longer their status as citizens which defined their presence in Cochinchina.

In tracing how the legal faculty of renunciation developed outside of French India, this thesis has lent new perspectives to the study of long-distance migrations from India. In one sense the route from Pondicherry (and Karikal) to Indochina can be added to the catalogue of late-nineteenth century passages from India as a testament to France's position as a defeated power in the subcontinent. Metcalf has conceived of British India, in an effort to incorporate into a single framework the many and varied movements out of the subcontinent from the late nineteenth century, as a 'centre of British imperial authority', a 'reservoir of expertise' used to 'extend and secure the British empire', and a colonial possession whose scale was so vast that it began to have colonial ambitions of its

own.⁸⁴⁴ When France similarly sought to extend its imperial reach, it too looked to its territories in India for expertise. Unlike the British in India, however, whose one perennial problem was to present potential recruits to British service elsewhere with terms more advantageous than what they could receive at home, the French were providing an outlet for men loyal to their cause but whose hopes of serving France in India could not be fulfilled because of the modest scale of France's hold there. While French India sent soldiers abroad to Indochina, this too was no sign of imperial strength. It was British conditions which dictated that the only place France could keep Indian soldiers in any significant number was outside of Indian territory.

If this little-examined trajectory, with its French imperial features, can help to enrich understandings of movements within the broader and more extensively studied British context, the history of renounced Indians in Indochina also adds weight to the argument that these movements must be thought of as much more than the transfer of labour and goods from one place to another. In Metcalf's attempt to widen the scope of thinking on these outward movements from the Indian subcontinent, he has conceived of British India as a 'nodal point' from which a 'spider web of connections' radiated outwards. These connections included the traffic of not just labour and goods but the administrative, military and commercial expertise of both Indians and (Indian-based) Britons, as well as technological, administrative and legal models.⁸⁴⁵ Bose adds ideas to the traffic which criss-crossed the 'Indian Ocean arena'. Offsetting the centrality of imperial power in Metcalf's conception, the ideas he adds were specifically Indian. They included religious beliefs (necessitating pilgrimage), notions of a Greater India reaching back in Southeast Asia to ancient times (but he follows Tagore on his outward journey, while I observe the overseas Indians greeting the poet in Saigon), and the development of Indian nationalism overseas.⁸⁴⁶

This thesis nestles somewhere between these two conceptions. Departing from Metcalf, I have demonstrated here that it was not only the ambitions of empire which

⁸⁴⁴ Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, pp. 68, 103, 122.

⁸⁴⁵ See Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*, especially pp. 1-15.

⁸⁴⁶ See Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, chapters 5, 6 and 7.

projected out from the Indian subcontinent. Colonised people who migrated took their ambitions with them too. I follow Bose in insisting that Indian ideas were an important part of the exchange across the Indian Ocean, but I make a different point about the nature of those ideas. If British colonial powers took administrative and legal models from India and transferred them elsewhere, in this case it was a colonised people who uprooted a legal model from their home to transplant and nurture overseas. There was no radical vision of a life outside the bounds of colonialism. It was ultimately a relatively successful attempt to use the distance between themselves and their place of origin to secure for themselves a better position, but it was a position anchored firmly within an imperial framework. That some colonised peoples of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were striving to secure a better future for themselves *within* empires is no less real simply because it has been pushed aside, with some embarrassment, by nationalist accounts of colonial history whose prime motive has been to document the deep injustices perpetrated by European colonial domination. My intention is not to detract from those accounts, but merely to provide a fuller view of the ways in which colonised peoples reacted to foreign rule.

On one level this thesis aims to put the Indian expatriate presence back into the colonial history of Vietnam in order to draw attention to the lives of renouncers (as well as many of their expatriate Indian peers) which have up to now been little-understood or misrepresented. It seeks too, to contribute to efforts to restore to the record the rich social diversity that was characteristic of Cochinchina under colonial rule. Beyond these aims, however, I have sought to bring new insights to the study of colonialism by closely examining its dynamics. The colonial situation in Indochina was more than a direct encounter between French oppressors and indigenous peoples. Nationalist histories tend to depict colonising powers as all-powerful in their oppression. Here I have sought to show the other side of the coin. Like any attempt to exert control, colonialism had its inherent weaknesses. The use of intermediaries was one means by which French authorities sought to solve a practical problem of rule: how to find competent, loyal and affordable cadres who might act as a buffer between the French and local people.

However, Indian French citizens as intermediaries engendered complex encounters outside of French control and arguably generated more problems than they solved.

The renouncers of French India were not just directed by French authorities towards Indochina where they quietly and obediently served the colonial state. In Cochinchina in particular they had an active agenda of their own. French officials located in Indochina knew that the renouncers' programme of seeking political and civil equality was a threat to their own ability to keep Vietnamese demands under control. They attempted to curtail renounced Indians' efforts to fully exercise their French citizenship in Cochinchina, (although some French politicians quickly learned to use renouncers' electoral franchise for their own political gain). These local authorities were ultimately helpless, however, to counter their superiors in the Metropole who held a more principled vision of France's overseas empire. This was precisely because the renounced Indians knew the power of the rule of law in the Metropole and worked out from Cochinchina how to grasp it.

Renounced Indians' moves to secure their political and civil rights in Cochinchina only aggravated Vietnamese convictions that the Indians' position of privilege in a colony other than their own went against a rightful social order. The renouncers' gains in terms of their legal recognition only served to widen the already yawning gap between the French doctrine of assimilation as it developed in French India, and the restrained manner in which it was put in practice in Indochina. These contacts undermined the colonial project as much as they sought to strengthen it. Even though the renounced Indians were furthering in Cochinchina an effort which had initially been born of a French notion of indigenous 'assimilation', their presence in colonial Indochina ultimately served to weaken France's hold there and to fuel Vietnamese anti-colonialism.

Bibliography

Archives and records

Archive of the League of Human Rights (Ligue des Droits de l'Homme), Nanterre

French Foreign Ministry Archives (Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères), Paris

Series Guerre 1939-45 Vichy Asie

French National Overseas Archives (Archives nationales d'outre mer), Aix-en-Provence

Fonds des Amiraux et du Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine

Fonds de la Résidence Supérieure au Tonkin

Fonds de la Mairie de Saigon

Fonds du Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies (Indochine anciens fonds and Indochine nouveaux fonds)

Fonds du Service de liason des originaires des territoires français d'outre-mer

National Archives of Cambodia, Phnom Penh

Fonds de la Résidence Supérieure au Cambodge

National Archives of India Record Centre, Pondicherry

Dépêches Ministérielles

Fonds de l'Etat civil

British National Archives

Foreign Office Records

War Office Records

India Office Records, British Library

Economic Department Records

Political and Secret Department Records

Public and Judicial Department Records

Vietnamese National Archives Number One (Luu Trữ Quốc Già 1), Hanoi

Fonds du Gouverneur général de l'Indochine

Fonds de la Résidence Supérieure au Tonkin
Fonds de la Mairie de Hanoi
Fonds du Tribunal de Première Instance de Haiphong
Fonds de la Justice de paix à compétence étendue de Tourane

Vietnamese National Archives Number Two (Luu Trữ Quốc Già 2), Ho Chi Minh City

Fonds du Gouverneur de la Cochinchine, including records classified under Services Locaux, Goucoch Divers and the post 1975 classifications I.A, I.B etc.
Fonds du Conseil Privé
Fonds du Conseil Colonial

Serial Runs

Les adresses de l'annuaire de l'Indochine
Annuaire des Etablissements Française dans l'Inde
Annuaire de la Cochinchine Française
Annuaire Générale de l'Indochine
Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine
Courrier de Saigon
Echo Annamite
Indochine-Inde
Journal d'Outre Mer
Journal Officiel des Etablissements Français dans l'Inde
Le Monde Colonial Illustré
Lục Tỉnh Tân Văn
Moniteur Officiel des Etablissements Français dans l'Inde
Réveil Saigonnais
La Tribune Indigène
Saigon-Dimanche

Books and Articles

Adas, Michael, *The Burma Delta: Economic development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1812-1941*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1974.

Affonço, Denise, *To the End of Hell: One woman's struggle to survive the Khmer Rouge*, London: Reportage Press, 2009.

Andrew, C.M., and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, 'The French 'Colonial Party': its Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885-1914', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1971, 99-128.

_____, 'The Groupe Colonial in the French Chamber of Deputies, 1892-1932', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1974, 837-866.

Annasse, Arthur, *Les comptoirs français dans l'Inde (trois siècles de présence française)*, Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1975.

Anthony, Francis Cyril, ed., *Gazeteer of India: Union Territory of Pondicherry Vol I*, Pondicherry: Administration of the Union Territory of Pondicherry Press, 1982.

Appavou, T.P., *Absurde renonciation de Indous chrétiens*, Saigon: Imprimerie Aug. Boch, 1890.

Baker, C.J., 'Economic Reorganization and the Slump in South and Southeast Asia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1981, 325-349.

Baker, C.J. and D. A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, Meerut: Macmillan of India, 1975.

Bayly, Christopher and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies, The Fall of British India, 1941-1945* Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004.

Bayly, Susan, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

_____, 'Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2004, 703-744.

Bose, Sugata, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Bouinais, A. and A. Paulus, *L'Indo-Chine Française contemporaine*, Paris: Challamel Aîné, 1885.

Brébion, Antoine, *Dictionnaire de Bio-Biographie Générale de l'Indochine Française*, Paris: Société d'Éditions Géographiques Maritimes et Coloniales, 1935.

Brett, Michael, 'Legislating for Inequality in Algeria: The *Senatus-Consulte* of 14 July 1865', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1988, 440-461.

Brocheux, Pierre, 'Vietnamiens et minorités en Cochinchine pendant la période coloniale', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1972, 443-437.

_____, 'Note Sur Gilbert Chiêu (1867-1919), Citoyen Français et Patriote Vietnamien', *Approches Asie*, no. 11, 1991, 72-81.

_____, *The Mekong Delta: Ecology, Economy and Revolution, 1860-1960*,
Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1995.

Brown, Rajaswary Ampalavanar, *Capital and Entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia*,
Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994.

Brun, Christelle, 'Chettys, prêteurs d'argent indiens et l'économie indochinoise (1880-1940)', unpublished DEA thesis, Aix en Provence [?], 2003.

Bùi Thị Ngọc Trang, *Lăng Tả Quân Lê Văn Duyệt*, HCM City: Nhà Xuất Bản Tổng Hợp, 2004.

Butcher, John and Howard Dick, eds., *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming*,
Houndsmills: St Martin's Press, 1993.

Camilli, Bertrand, *La représentation des indigènes en Indochine*, Toulouse: Imprimerie J. Fournier, 1914.

Caplan, Lionel, *Children of Colonialism. Anglo-Indians in a Post Colonial World*,
Oxford: Berg, 2001.

Carter, Marina, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*, London: Leicester University Press, 1996.

Chanda, Nayan. 'Indians in Indochina', in K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani, (eds.), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Times Academic Press, ISEAS, 1993, 31-45.

Chatterjee, Partha, 'Caste and subaltern consciousness' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV. Writings on South Asian history and society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Clairon, M., *La renonciation au statut personnel dans l'Inde Française*, Montpellier : Causse, Graille et Castelnau, 1926.

Clammer, John, 'French Studies on the Chinese in Indochina: A Bibliographical Survey', *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1981, 15-26.

Clancy-Smith, Julia Ann, and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1998.

Clarke, Colin, Ceri Peach and Steven Vertovec, 'Introduction: themes in the study of the South Asian diaspora', in Clarke, Peach and Vertovec (eds.), *South Asians Overseas, Migration and Ethnicity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Coedès, G., *Les Etats hindouisés de l'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, Paris: de Boccard, 1989 [1948].

Cohen, Abner. 'Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas', in C. Meillassoux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, 10–16.

Cohn, Bernard, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987.

_____, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Conklin, Alice, *A Mission to Civilise: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Cook, Nola and Li Tana, eds., *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004.

Cooper, Frederick, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Cooper, F. and A.L. Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire; Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Dairien, Prosper, '9 Mars 1945...Septembre 1946 et les Français et les Français de l'Inde', *Trait d'Union*, August 1995.

Dareste, Appert and Legendre, *Recueil de législation et jurisprudence coloniale*, Paris: A. Challamel, 1903 and 1911 editions.

David, Annoussamy, 'Le Mariage entre oncle et niece dans le sud de l'Inde', *Trait d'Union*, April 2002.

Delval, Raymond, *Musulmans français d'origine indienne*, Paris: Centre des Hautes Etudes sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes, 1987.

Deming Lewis, Martin, 'One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The Assimilation Theory in French Colonial Policy', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 4, 1962, 129-153.

Dessama, Evariste, *Tribulations de l'Inde Française*, Saigon: France Asie, 1950.

Devillers, Philippe, *Histoire du Viêt Nam de 1940 à 1952*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952.

Diouf, Mamadou, 'The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the *originaires* of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalisation Project', *Development and Change*, no. 29, 1998, 671-696.

Dirks, Nicholas B., *Castes of mind : colonialism and the making of modern India*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Dupuis, Jacques, *Histoire de l'Inde*, Pondicherry: Kailash, 1996.

Dutton, Paul, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Edwards, Penny, 'Womanizing Indochina: Fiction, Nation and Cohabitation in Colonial Cambodia, 1890-1930' In Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds.), *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998, 108-130.

Esquer, A., *Essai sur les Castes dans l'Inde*, Pondicherry: A. Saligny, 1870.

Falzon, Mark-Anthony, *The Sindhi Diaspora 1860-2000*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Fanselow, Frank S., 'The Disinvention of Caste among Tamil Muslims', in C.J. Fuller (ed.), *Caste Today*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Fawaz, Leila Tarazi, and C.A. Bayly, eds. *Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

de Feyssal, P., *L'Endettement agraire en Cochinchine: Rapport d'ensemble au gouverneur général de l'Indochine*, Hanoi: Impr. d'Extrême-Orient, 1933.

Firpo, Christina Elizabeth, 'The Durability of the Empire: Race, Empire and 'Abandoned' Children in Colonial Vietnam 1870-1956', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 2007.

Frykenburg, R.E., *Guntur District, 1788-1848: a history of local influence and central authority in south India*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

Girault, Arthur, *Principes de colonisation et de législation coloniale. Volume II: Généralités – Notions Historiques*, Paris: Recueil-Sirey, 1927.

Goscha, Christopher E., *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution 1885-1954*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999.

_____, 'Inter-Asian Debates and Intersecting Colonial Encounters in French Indochina: Three Case Studies', *Modern Asian Studies*, forthcoming.

Gouvernement des Etablissements français dans l'Inde, *Livre Jaune de l'Inde Française*, Pondicherry: Imprimerie du gouvernement, 1940.

Guha, Sumit, 'The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India, c. 1600-1990', *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, vol. 20, 2003, 148-167.

Gupta, N., 'The Citizens of French India: the Issue of Cultural Identity in Pondicherry in the XIXth Century', *Association historique internationale de l'Océan Indien, Les relations historiques et culturelles entre la France et l'Inde XVIIe-XXe siècles, Actes de conférence internationales France-Inde, 21-28 juillet 1986*, 161-173.

Herchenroder, Philippe, *Etude sur le statut juridique des indigènes chrétiens*, Paris : Domat Montchrestien, 1935.

Hooker, M.B., *Legal Pluralism. An Introduction to Colonial and Neo-Colonial Laws*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Huard, P. 'Chinois, Japonais et Hindous en Indochine', *Bulletin économique de l'Indochine*, vol. 3, 1939, 484-485.

_____. 'Introduction à l'étude des Eurasiens', *Bulletin économique de l'Indochine*, vol. 3, 1939, 715-758.

Hue-Tam Ho Tai, 'The Politics of Compromise: The Constitutionalist Party and the Electoral Reforms of 1922 in French Cochinchina', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1984, 371-391.

_____, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Irschick, Eugene F., *Politics and Social Conflict in South India. The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Jain, Ravindra K., *Indian Communities Abroad: Themes and Literature*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1993.

James, C.L.R., *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint l'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, Tiptree, Essex: Allison and Busby, 1989 [1938].

Kelly, John D., 'Fear of Culture: British regulation of Indian Marriage in Post-Indenture Fiji', *Ethnohistory*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1989, 372-391.

Lal, Brij V., ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006.

Larcher, Agathe, 'La voie étroite des réformes coloniales et la 'collaboration franco-annamite' (1917-1928)', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre mer*, vol. 82, no. 309, 1995, 387-420.

Leconte, Nadia, 'La migration des Pondichériens et des Karikalais en Indochine ou le combat des Indiens-renonçants en Cochinchine pour la reconnaissance de leur statut (1865-1954)', unpublished DEA thesis, Université de Haute-Bretagne, 2001.

Leonardi, Ch., 'L'Usure en Cochinchine', *Extrême-Asie*, May 1926, 226-231.

Lombard, Denis, 'Another 'Mediterranean in Southeast Asia', *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, vol. 1, 2007, 3-9.

MacHale, Shawn Frederick, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.

Mahadevan, Rahman, 'Immigrant entrepreneurs in colonial Burma: An exploratory study of the role of the Nattukottai Chettiars of Tamil Nadu, 1880-1930', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1978, 329-358.

Malleret, L., 'Cochinchine, terre inconnue', *Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises*, no. 18, vol. 3, 1943, 9-26.

_____, *L'Archéologie du delta du Mékong*, Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, 1959.

Marius, Claude, 'Les Pondichériens dans l'administration coloniale de l'Indochine', in J. Weber (ed.), *Les relations entre la France et l'Inde de 1673 à nos jours*, Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2002, 391-398.

Markovits, Claude, 'Indian Merchant Networks outside India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Preliminary Survey', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1999, 883-991.

_____, *The Global World of Indian Merchants 1750-1947, Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Marquet, Jean, *Les Cinq Fleurs, l'Indochine expliquée*, Hanoi: Directeur de l'instruction publique, 1928.

Marr, David, *Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism, 1885-1925*, Berkeley: University of California, 1971.

_____, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Marsot, Alain G., *The Chinese Community in Vietnam under the French*, Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993.

Mathieu, E., *Les Prêts Usuaires et le Crédit Agricole en Cochinchine*, Paris : Recueil Sirey, 1912.

Metcalf, Thomas R., *Imperial Connections: Indian in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Michalon, Paul, 'Des Indes françaises aux Indiens français ou Comment peut-on être Franco-Pondichérien?', unpublished DEA thesis, Université Aix-Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, 1990.

Miles, William F., 'Citizens without soil: the French of India (Pondicherry)', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol 13, no 2, 1990.

_____, *Imperial Burdens: Countercolonialism in Former French India*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995.

Mines, Mattison, 'Social Stratification among Muslim Tamils in Tamil Nadu, South India', in Imtiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1978.

More, J.B.P., 'The Marakkayar Muslims of Karikal, South India', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1991, 25-44.

_____, 'Indians in French Indochina', in K.S. Mathew (ed.), *French in India and Indian Nationalism (1700 A.D. - 1963 A.D.)*, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1999, 447-460.

_____, 'Pathan and Tamil Muslim Migrants in French Indochina', *Pondicherry University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, vol. 1, nos. 1 and 2, 2000, 113-128.

Morice, A., *People and Wildlife in and around Saigon, 1872-1873*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1997 [1875].

Murray, Martin, *The Development of Capitalism in Colonial Indochina (1870-1940)*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Muthiah, S. , Meenakshi Meyappan, and Visalakshi Ramasawamy, *The Chettiar Heritage*, Chennai: Madras Editorial Services, 2002.

Ner, Marcel, *Les musulmans de l'Indochine française*, Hanoi: Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1941.

Ngô Vĩnh Long, *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991 [1973].

Nguyễn Mạnh Cường and Nguyễn Minh Ngọc, *Người Chăm (Những Nghiên Cứu Bước Đầu)* [The Cham (Initial Studies)], Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 2003.

Nguyễn Phương Thảo, 'Văn hóa dân gian miền Nam Việt Nam [The Culture of Worship in the South of Vietnam]', [no publisher or place of publication given], 1997.

Omissi, David, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994.

Osborne, Milton E., *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia*, Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1997 [1969].

Pairaudeau, Natasha, 'Via l'Indochine: trajectoires coloniales de l'immigration sud-indienne', *Hommes et Migrations*, 1268-1269, July – October 2007, 24-33.

_____, 'Indo-china: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia', in Brij V. Lal (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*, Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006, 200-203.

Pelley, Patricia M., *Postcolonial Vietnam: new histories of the national past*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

Peters, Erica J., 'Resistance, Rivalries and Restaurants: Vietnamese Workers in Interwar France', *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, 109-143.

Peycam, Philippe, 'Intellectuals and Political Commitment in Vietnam: The Emergence of a Public Sphere in Colonial Saigon (1926-1933)', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1999.

Phan Trung Nghĩa, *Công tử Bạc Liêu Sự thật và giai thoại [Bac Lieu Playboy, Truth and Myth]*, Ho Chi Minh City: Youth Publishing House, 2006.

Pretini, Jean-Louis, 'Saigon-Cyrnos', in Philippe Franchini (ed.), *Saigon 1925-1945 De la 'Belle Colonie' à l'éclosion révolutionnaire ou la fin des dieux blancs*, Paris: Editions Autrement, 1992, 92-103.

Reddi, V.M., 'Indians in the Indochina States and their Problems', in I.J. Bahadur Singh (ed.), *Indians in South East Asia*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd, 1982, 155-158.

Robequain, Charles, *The Economic Development of Viet-Nam and Indo-China*, London: Oxford University Press, 1944.

Ross Barnett, Marguerite, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Rudner, David, 'Banker's Trust and the Culture of Banking among the Nattukottai Chettiars of Colonial South India', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1989, 417-458.

_____, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India, the Nattukottai Chettiars*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Saada, Emmanuelle, 'Citoyens et sujets de l'Empire Français: Les usages du droit dans la situation coloniale', *Genèses*, no. 53, 2003, 4-24.

_____, *Les enfants de la colonie: les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté*, Paris: La Découverte, 2007.

Salmon, Claudine, 'The Contribution of the Chinese to the Development of Southeast Asia: A New Appraisal', in *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1981, 260-275.

Schneider, William, 'Towards the Improvement of the Human Race: the History of Eugenics in France', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 54, 1982, 269-91.

Sébastien, Brigitte, 'Les Pondichérriens de l'Ile de France. Etude des pratiques sociales et religieuses', unpublished DEA thesis, Toulouse, 1999.

Simon, Pierre-Jean, *Rapatriés d'Indochine: Un village franco-indochinois en Bourbonnais*, Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 1981.

Singaravélou, 'Indians in the French overseas Departments: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion', in Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach and Steven Vertovec (eds.), *South Asians Overseas. Migration and Ethnicity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 75-87.

Singha, Radhika, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 168-228.

Smith, R.B., 'Bui Quang Chieu and the Constitutionalist Party in French Cochinchina, 1917-1930', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1969, 131-150.

_____, *Vietnam and the West*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971.

_____, 'The Development of Opposition to French Rule in Southern Vietnam 1880-1940', *Past and Present*, no. 54, 1972, 94-129.

_____, 'The Vietnamese Elite of French Cochinchina', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1972, 459-482.

Son Nam, *Phong Trào Duy Tân ở Bắc Trung Nam, Miền Nam Đầu Thế Kỷ XX - Thiên Địa Hội và Cuộc Minh Tân* [The Duy Tân movement in the North, Centre and South; The South in the Twentieth Century; The Heaven and Earth Society; The Minh Tân Organisation], Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 2003, [originally two volumes, 1975 and 1971 respectively].

_____, *Đất Gia Định - Bến Nghé Xưa và Người Sài Gòn* [Gia Định Soil; Old Bến Nghé; People of Saigon], Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 2004 [three volumes first published respectively 1984, 1992 and 1992].

_____, *Phong Trào Duy Tân; Son Nam, Đất Gia Định; Vương Hồng Sển, Sài Gòn Năm Xưa* [Saigon in the Past], Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2003 [1960].

Stokhof, M., 'Javanese in Hồ Chí Minh City today: an Aftermath of Coolie Migration in French Colonial Vietnam', unpublished Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2002.

Stoler, Ann Laura, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a reconfiguration of early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1997, 735-762.

Sundararajan, Saroja, *Glimpses of the History of Karaikkal*, Madras: Lalitha Publications, 1984.

Tamby, Pourouchotman, *British raj et swaraj*, Pondicherry: L. Sinnaya Press, 1918.

Taylor, Philip, *Goddess on the Rise: Pilgrimage and Popular Religion in Vietnam*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.

_____, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2007.

Thompson, Virginia, *French Indo-China*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937.

Thurston, E., *Castes and Tribes of South India*, Madras: Government Press, 1909.

Tinker, Hugh, *A New System of Slavery: the Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920*, London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Race Relations, 1974.

_____, 'Between Africa, Asia and Europe: Mauritius: Cultural Marginalism and Political Control', *African Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 304, 1977, 321-337.

Truong Buu Lam, ed., *Colonialism Experienced, Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism 1900-1931*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Valmaire, M., *Rapport sur l'enseignement dans l'Inde Française du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*, Pondicherry: Imprimerie moderne de Pondichéry, 1922.

Vann, Michael, 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Variation and Difference in French Colonial Racism', in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (eds.), *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Vassal, Gabrielle M., *Three Years in Vietnam (1907-1910)*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999 [1910].

Vidy, G., 'La communauté indienne en Indochine', *Sud-Est*, no. 6, November 1949, 1-8.

Vimeux, *De l'immigration en Cochinchine et les taxes spéciales aux Immigrants asiatiques*, Paris: Challamel Ainé, 1875.

Vinson, Julien, 'Les musulmans du sud de l'Inde', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol 2, 1907, 199-204.

Vương Hồng Sển, *Sai Gon Năm Xưa* [Saigon in the Past], Ho Chi Minh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2003 [1960].

Washbrook, David, 'The Development of Caste Organisation in South India' in C. J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook (eds.) *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, Meerut: Macmillan of India, 1975, 150-203.

Weber, Jacques, 'Accumulation et assimilation dans les Etablissements de l'Inde la caste et les valeurs de l'occident', conference proceedings, CRASOM XXXVIII – 2-3 February 1978.

_____, *Pondichéry et les comptoirs de l'Inde après Dupleix : La démocratie au pays des castes*, Paris: Denoel, 1996.

Winnacker, Rudolph A., 'Elections in Algeria and the French Colonies Under the Third Republic', *American Political Science Review*, no. 32, 1938, 261-277.

Woodside, Alexander, 'The Development of Social Organizations in Vietnamese Cities in the Late Colonial Period', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1971, 39-64.

Zinoman, Peter, 'Vũ Trọng Phụng's *Dumb Luck* and the nature of Vietnamese Modernism', introduction to Vũ Trọng Phụng, *Dumb Luck*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

_____, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Internet sites

Abdoule-Carime, Nasir, 'Les communautés indiennes en Indochine', published online at Paris, by the Association d'échanges et de Formation pour les Etudes Khmeres (<http://aefek.free.fr/lecture.htm>), 2003.

Anon, Mẹ Maria Lệnh Cho Ta Dùng Phương Pháp Cứu Rồi Là Làn Hạt Mân Côi, at www.dongcong.net/MeMaria/ThangManCoi/12.htm.

Government of France, *Historical Database of Deputies in the National Assembly*, at www.assembleenationale.com/historire/biographie/1889-1940.

Michel, Pierre, 'Les Mystifications Epistolaire d'Octave Mirabeau', University of Angers [n.d.]. 1-6, pp. 3-4. at www.membres.lycos.fr/fabiensolda.

Appendices

Appendix I: Text of the 'Decree relative to personal status', 21 September 1881

— 472 —

DÉCRET

RELATIF AU STATUT PERSONNEL.

Mont-sous-Vaudrey, le 21 septembre 1881.

LE PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE,

Sur la proposition du Ministre de la marine et des colonies, et du garde des sceaux, Ministre de la justice,

DÉCRÈTE :

ART. 1^{er}. Dans les Établissements français de l'Inde les natifs des deux sexes de toutes castes et religions, majeurs de vingt-et-un ans, pourront renoncer à leur statut personnel dans les formes et aux conditions ci-après déterminées. Par le fait de cette renonciation, qui sera définitive et irrévocable, ils sont régis, ainsi que leurs femmes et leurs enfants mineurs, par les lois civiles et politiques applicables aux Français dans la colonie.

ART. 2. Les natifs mineurs de vingt-et-un ans pourront renoncer à leur statut personnel avec l'assistance des personnes dont le consentement est requis pour la validité du mariage.

Lorsque la renonciation aura lieu au moment du mariage, elle pourra être constatée dans l'acte de célébration.

ART. 3. Les natifs mineurs de vingt-et-un ans mariés pourront faire cette renonciation dans la forme prescrite pour les majeurs.

ART. 4. La renonciation au statut personnel, quand elle ne sera pas faite dans l'acte de célébration du mariage, comme il est dit en l'article 2, sera reçue par l'officier de l'état-civil du domicile des déclarants dans la forme des actes de l'état-civil, sur un registre spécial établi à cet effet, et tenu conformément à l'article 40 du code civil modifié par le décret du 24 avril 1880.

Elle pourra être également faite soit devant le juge de paix assisté de son greffier et de deux témoins, soit devant un notaire.

Dans ces deux derniers cas, une expédition du procès-verbal ou de l'acte notarié sera immédiatement transmise à l'officier de l'état civil compétent qui en opérera la transcription sur le registre à ce destiné.

ART. 5. Dans les 15 jours de la renonciation ou de sa transcription, elle sera publiée administrativement par extrait et sans frais au *Moniteur officiel* de la colonie.

ART. 6. Les natifs qui renonceront à leur statut personnel indiqueront dans l'acte de renonciation le nom patronymique qu'ils entendent adopter pour eux et leur descendance.

Art. 7. Toute personne pourra se faire délivrer, par les dépositaires du registre destiné aux actes de renonciation au statut personnel, des extraits de ce registre. Ces extraits délivrés conformes aux registres et légalisés par le président du tribunal de première instance ou par le juge qui le remplacera, feront foi jusqu'à inscription de faux.

Art. 8. Il ne sera perçu par les officiers de l'état civil, pour chaque expédition d'un acte de renonciation au statut personnel, que trente centimes, comme pour l'expédition d'un acte de naissance, de décès ou de publication de mariage.

Il n'est rien dû pour la confection desdits actes ou leur transcription sur les registres.

Art. 9. Les renonciations faites, antérieurement à la promulgation du présent décret devant les greffiers, notaires ou tabellions, devront être transcrites sur le registre spécial par les soins des parties intéressées ou du ministère public.

Les renonçants pourront renouveler leur renonciation afin de jouir du bénéfice de l'art. 6 et lui faire produire les effets prévus dans les articles 1^{er} et suivants.

Art. 10. Il n'est pas dérogé aux règles générales de droit actuel relatives aux renonciations faites dans d'autres formes que celles prévues par le présent décret.

Art. 11. Le Ministre de la marine et des colonies et le garde des sceaux, Ministre de la justice, sont chargés, chacun en ce qui le concerne, de l'exécution du présent décret qui sera inséré au *Bulletin des lois* et au *Bulletin officiel de la marine*.

Fait à Mont-Sous-Vaudrey, le 21 septembre 1881.

JULES GRÉVY.

Par le Président de la République :

Le Ministre de la marine et des colonies,

G. CLOUÉ.

Le Garde des sceaux, Ministre de la justice,

JULES CAZOT.

Appendix II : The steamboat ventures of Darmanaden Prouchandy

I have said that those renouncers who eschewed the secure life of a functionary in Indochina and struck out instead in private business tended to gravitate towards characteristically Tamil enterprises. One notable exception to this rule is the attempt of the renouncer Darmanaden (Pierre) Prouchandy to establish in the 1890s a steamboat service on the Mekong Delta waterways. His story reads as a cautionary tale of the difficulties faced when a 'so-called' Frenchman tried to compete directly with French interests. The cool reception Prouchandy received when he attempted to do business like a Frenchman (by pursuing subsidies from the state which he felt he deserved as much as his French metropolitan compatriots) goes some way to explaining why most renouncers resident in Cochinchina felt they had more to be gained by entering into commerce alongside their Tamil peers.

Darmanaden Prouchandy arrived in Saigon from Pondicherry in 1870.⁸⁴⁷ He was involved, like several of his Tamil compatriots, in supply contracts in the 1870s and 1880s. We know he filled orders for milk and other diverse items (including matches, corks, mosquito nets, and soap) to military hospitals in Baria and Saigon in this period.⁸⁴⁸ His entry into the business of transport began around the same time that he established, with his Portuguese wife (who was probably Macanese), a drinks shop and factory producing carbonated drinks (see Chapter Three).⁸⁴⁹

There are records of two steamboats owned by Darmanaden Prouchandy. The 'Prouchandy' was registered in Phnom Penh from at least 1892. The 'Alexandre' ran a passenger service through the 1890s from Phnom Penh to Hà Tiên via Châu Đốc and was also contracted to carry the post.⁸⁵⁰

Prouchandy's persistence in requesting government subsidies to run his service over this period demonstrates his conviction that the *Compagnie des Messageries*

⁸⁴⁷ VNA2 SL4577 Demande de réhabilitation formulée par M. Prouchandy (Darmanaden) demeurant à Saigon 1905.

⁸⁴⁸ VNA2 CP8133 Cahier des charges relatifs à la fourniture des matériels et matières grasses...soumission Darmanaden 1879; VNA2 CP8143 Hopitaux, Cahier des charges pour la fourniture du lait pendant l'année 1880.

⁸⁴⁹ VNA2 Goucoch IA.6/015: Ernest Outrey Deputy of Cochinchina to GCCH, 14 February 1916.

⁸⁵⁰ VNA2 IA.5/124(4) Transports Fluviaux, dossier Darmanaden (1898); VNA2 IA.5/124(7) Subvention Prouchandy 1893: Administrator Châu Đốc to General Secretary Colonial Council, 2 December 1891.

Fluviales was being unfairly favoured in receiving such subsidies. Some of the evidence supports Pouchandy's case. When he established his service in October 1891, local administrators were favourable to the idea of encouraging him with a subsidy to serve the route Hà Tiên-Châu Đốc. In March of the following year, however, the *Messageries Fluviales* proposed to established a competing service between the same two ports. The company insisted upon, and obtained, a higher subsidy than that which Pouchandy had proposed but had yet to receive.⁸⁵¹ Furthermore, Pouchandy repeatedly attempted, but failed, to wrest control of the government subsidised Saigon-Bangkok line from the *Messageries Fluviales*.⁸⁵² Pouchandy was granted short-term aid (*secours*) a few times to run the 'Alexandre.' On each occasion, though this was accompanied on the part of colonial authorities by a nervous statement that the *secours* should not be considered a subsidy (*subvention*) for fear that it might constitute a breach of the government's contract with the *Messageries Fluviales*.⁸⁵³

The other side of the story emerges in officials' highly critical assessments of the steamboat 'Alexandre'. They claimed Pouchandy's inability to compete with the *Messageries Fluviales* was due not to favouritism but to the poor quality of service he provided. In 1894 the Administrator of Hà Tiên, in supporting the rejection of yet another request from Pouchandy, deplored the quality of the service provided by the 'Alexandre': 'If Mr. Pouchandy, for want of a subsidy, ceases to run his boat from Châu Đốc to Hà Tiên and vice versa, the *arrondissement* of Hà Tiên will not only not suffer, but will even rejoice'.⁸⁵⁴ A safety check on the 'Alexandre' in the same year concluded that 'the speed reached was barely superior to that of the current'. A navigation permit was nonetheless granted on the grounds that the feeble power of the craft did not actually constitute a danger.⁸⁵⁵ Reports from Hà Tiên under a new administrator in 1898

⁸⁵¹ VNA2 IA.5/124(7): Messageries Fluviales to Colonial Council, 2 March 1892.

⁸⁵² See VNA2 IA.5/124(8) Pouchandy service de chaloupes entre Hà Tiên et Bangkok, 1893-1894; VNA2 IA.5/124(7); and VNA2 IA.5/124 Navigation...Demande de subvention présentée par M. Pouchandy pour un service de chaloupe...1893-1898.

⁸⁵³ See for example VNA2 IA.4/207(30) Navigation: Un secours de \$200 accordé au Sieur Pouchandy 1893.

⁸⁵⁴ VNA2 IA.5/124(6) Demande d'indemnité formulée par le Sr. Pouchandy (1894) : Administrator Hà Tiên to GGCCH, 17 December 1894.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.: 'Procès-verbal d'essai de la chaloupe à vapeur 'Pouchandy' appartenant au Sieur Pouchandy demeurant à Cholon, 12 décembre, 1894.'

continued to described the 'Alexandre' as 'old, infected and completely inadequate in comfort or speed'.⁸⁵⁶

The abrasive nature of Prouchandy's relationship with colonial authorities implies that that they considered him out of place in this 'European' role and that he was all too aware of this judgement made against him. Following a complaint in 1893 from the postal master in Phnom Penh that Prouchandy had failed to send someone to the office to collect the post, Prouchandy wrote in a letter to the Governor General of Cochinchina: 'why does he [the Phnom Penh post master] think he is addressing an inferior?'.⁸⁵⁷ In 1894 the Administrator of Hà Tiên proposed that Prouchandy's rightful competitors were Chinese and Vietnamese boat owners rather than the French-run services. In this letter the administrator made mention of several Chinese vessels and one run by an 'Annamite from Cholon' who also plied the route between Châu Đốc and Hà Tiên, and 'never asked for subsidies'.⁸⁵⁸

The remarks of Kieffer, an orderly (*planton*) from Kampot and would-be passenger of the 'Alexandre' spell out most clearly the uncomfortable relationship between Prouchandy and his French clientele. In January 1895, Prouchandy refused to make his craft wait in dock at Hà Tiên while Kieffer's baggage and servants were unloaded from an incoming boat from Kampot. Kieffer wrote to complain:

I find that this race [*race*] who appears to be very concerned by the defective service it offers, could be more amenable in order to attract the good will of the administration and the business of the *colons*...[it needs to be able to] to do sufficiently good business [in order to] pass up the subsidies that it does not cease to request, without meriting them. In addition, I have heard the *malabar* patron employ vulgar expressions when speaking of senior French *serviteurs*, no doubt because he thinks he has the right to call himself French, which, unfortunately, is the case'.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁶ VNA2 IA.5/124(4) Transports Fluviaux, dossier Darmanaden (1898): Administrator Hà Tiên to GGCCH, 1 September 1898.

⁸⁵⁷ VNA2 IA.5/124(5) Demande d'une prime d'encouragement – Prouchandy 1893.

⁸⁵⁸ VNA2 IA.5/124(6) Demande d'indemnité formulée par le Sr. Prouchandy (1894).

⁸⁵⁹ VNA2 IA.5/124(2) Affaire Prouchandy 1896: Kieffer, *planton* in Kampot, to Administrator of Indigenous Affairs, Châu Đốc, 10 January 1896.

The captain of the 'Alexandre' refuted this view, maintaining that the boat had already gone nearly a kilometre when it was signaled by Kieffer on the jetty demanding it return to fetch him. 'Given the great distance and out of fear of missing the tide M. Dairy [Dairy Prouchandy, a relative employed by Darmanaden] informed me it was impossible to return, taken that Mr. Kieffer was not even ready to depart'.⁸⁶⁰

Darmanaden Prouchandy's venture into river transportation met with resistance from the Frenchmen he was aiming both to compete with and to cater to. His efforts to appeal to French tastes in the urban setting of Saigon met with somewhat greater success, as did the more modest efforts of other Tamils. These efforts fell victim, however, as did many Tamil efforts to cater to a French clientele, to French competition.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.: Commandant 'Alexandre' to Administrator Châu Đốc, 17 January 1896.

Appendix III : French Indian social organisations in Cochinchina, 1900-1940

French Indian Social Organisations in Cochinchina, 1900-1940		
name	date of founding	membership
Société de Secours Mutuel des Indiens en Cochinchine	1903	Indian French citizens
Syndicat des Français de l'Inde	1907	Indian French citizens
Amicale des Français de l'Inde	1908	no information
Libérale de l'Inde	1909	no information
Association Sportive Hindoue	1909	Indian French citizens
Mutuelle de Karikal	1910	no information
Union Amicale Indo-Française	1919 (first mention)	Indian French citizens
Solidarité	1922	no information
Union Progressiste Hindou	1923	Indian French citizens
Mutualité Hindoue	1928	citizens and subjects of French India
Mutuelle des Indo-Français Employés de Commerce et d'Industrie de Cochinchine	1931	citizens and subjects of French India (and employed in commerce or industry)
Mutuelle Hindoue de la Cochinchine	1935	citizens and subjects of French India
Société Hindou-Sport de Saigon	1935 (first mention)	no information

Sources in footnote.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁶¹ VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0810 Sociétés... Société Indo-Française de la Cochinchine: 'Société de Secours Mutuels des Indiens en Cochinchine', Statutes 1903; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0215 Sociétés 1902-1909... Syndicat des Français de l'Inde, 1907; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/029 Sociétés : Diverses sociétés et cercles : Amicale des Français de l'Inde 1908...Libérale des l'Inde statuts 1909; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0213 Sociétés 1902-1911...Association Sportive Hindoue; VNA2 Goucoch IB.24/0218bis Sociétés...Mutuelle de Karikal (1910); 'Union Amicale Indo-française', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 25 November 1919; 'Un banquet', *Réveil Saigonnais*, 9 June 1923; VNA2 GD1346 Union Progressiste Hindou; VNA2 GD2997 Mutuelle Hindoue de la Cochinchine, 1935; subfolder 'Mutualité Hindoue', Statutes of the *Mutualité Hindoue*, 1932; VNA2 GD2998 Mutuelle des Indo-Français employées de Commerce et d'Industrie, 1934; Statutes 1934; No author, *La Mutuelle Hindoue de Cochinchine*, *Société de Secours Mutuels*, Statuts, Saigon: Imprimerie Joseph Viet, 1935.